

Dear Thay, Dear Lovely Blue Cliff Monastery-

I wrote a poem when I attended my first retreat with Thay in Estes Park, CO. His teachings and you all have changed my life in so many ways. I would not be the person that I am today without Thay's teachings. I just heard that Thay has stopped eating and that makes my heart very heavy. However, I know that he will always be in our hearts and souls and his teachings will live on through all of you monastics...and through all of us. A deep bow of gratitude to you all for doing this day of celebration for Thay and inviting us. Here is my poem:

"Peaceful Walking- Winter 2010"

In the early winter morning air, I see my breath.

I see breathing.

Breathing in, I walk....breathing out, I walk...  
trying to be mindful of my breath, my steps...  
mindful of breath....mindful of walking.

Thoughts continue to explode and interrupt  
the solitude of the coming of dawn.

Back to the breath...back to the steps...  
and peace returns again for the moment.

The sky is still pre-dawn dark with only a soft street light shining behind me.

Seeing my shadow with my hooded jacket on  
reminds me of a Buddhist monk or nun (my sisters and brothers)....

This is not "me" walking and breathing-  
it is not female or male, old or young,  
healthy or sick....

just a being, softly crunching frosted leaves with mindful steps...  
breathing....walking....

The grass sparkles like glistening jewels, catching the reflection of the light.

As I walk, fear is always a companion along the journey.

I am not my chronic illness, a serious digestive disorder.

I am just a being that happens to have a digestive disorder.

The fear of becoming sicker hovers in the background,  
but going back to mindfulness keeps it at bay.

Breathing in....breathing out.....walking....walking....  
mind is at peace once again... for the moment.

Clouds are beginning to dissipate and a sliver of the moon displays itself.

Along with one shining star, the dawn arrives like a symphony of

brilliant orange and red, making me smile....  
hearing the music of a new day arriving.  
A crow swoops overhead with wings flapping,  
sounding like someone is breathing out hard and fast....  
breath.....breath....  
as it calls out to it's mate.

I am the crow...  
I am the cloud...  
I am the moon...  
I am the star...  
I am the shadow...  
I am the breathing, I am the walking and they are me.  
And we are one...mind, body, spirit...like  
the Three Jewels; the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.  
Just breathing...walking...and smiling :-)).

Mariann Taigman, a fellow being along the path