

Prayer to Mother Earth and Our Ancestors

New Year 2021

Dear Beloved Mother Earth, Dear Blood Ancestors and Spiritual Ancestors,

We stand before you, on the cusp of the New Year 2021, with awareness, gratitude, and the deep aspiration to live in harmony as a spiritual family. We know that you are alive in us, and that we can always take refuge in you.

Dear Mother Earth, we see that we and all our ancestors are your children. With your patience, stability, endurance and creativity you have nourished us and guided us through many lifetimes. You have given birth to countless Great Beings, Buddhas, Saints, and Bodhisattvas. You are the great Earth, you are Terra, you are Gaia, you are this beautiful blue planet. You are the Earth Refreshing Bodhisattva—fragrant, cool, and kind. We see that although we and our ancestors have made many mistakes, you have always forgiven us. Each time we return to you, you are ready to open your arms and embrace us.

Due to our wrong perceptions and discrimination, we have lived a life of separation, hatred, loneliness, suffering, and despair. This year has brought new and unforeseen challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic continues to rage across the globe, and in its wake we struggle to remain calm and free from delusion. We have allowed individualism to prevail, and it has caused severe damage and hardship to you and to ourselves. By continuing to run after fame, wealth, power, and sensual pleasures—forgetting that these pursuits can never bring us true happiness—we neglect to heal and transform our own suffering and the collective suffering. Without such healing and transformation, fear and racism engrained deeply in the fabric of our society and its institutions will continue to compound old wounds with fresh wounds.

Through many lifetimes we have been unable to recognize you, Mother Earth, manifesting as the Pure Land, as the Kingdom of God, as the most wondrous home that we have. We have continued to run after a distant Promised Land in heaven or in the future. This has caused us and you much suffering. Tonight, as we touch the Earth, we stop grasping at an imagined happiness. Instead, we offer you and

our ancestors our true presence. We have arrived. You are our home—our only home.

We have learned that only love and compassion can make our lives meaningful, allowing us to protect and preserve your beauty and to heal ourselves. We can learn to live as one family—as a community of brothers and sisters, all children of the same Great Mother Earth—giving our descendants a chance for a healthy and bright future. Discrimination, violence and hatred, which have brought about systemic racism and the climate crisis, will not continue to persist if we learn to look at one another with eyes of compassion and non-fear. We know that only through building brotherhood and sisterhood like that in the present moment can we make this future a reality here and now.

Dear Mother Earth, tonight, as we enter the New Year of 2021, we make the vow to learn to live in harmony and peace in the very heart of our family and our community—just as bees in the same beehive, and cells in the same body. We promise to develop the capacity to remain open-hearted in our communication with members of our family and our community, and not to get caught in our own perceptions. We promise to always listen deeply and to use the kind of peaceful and loving speech that can bring about real transformation and healing. Mother Earth, we shall learn to listen to your voice to understand you deeply, taking to heart your guidance and the guidance of our ancestors. Your voice of insight and wisdom lives inside of us. We also vow to listen to our brothers, our sisters, our friends, and to our children —seeing you in them—so that we may live in peace and harmony together. We promise to learn to see the happiness and well-being of our family and community as our own happiness and well-being.

Dear Mother Earth, with great reverence we begin anew. We promise to you and to our children that we shall learn to breathe and walk mindfully in each moment of our daily life, to use the eyes and ears of the family and community in order to understand, to live simply and to love without discrimination—as you do. Mother Earth, you accept all things: the rain, the sun, the decaying organic matter of our very bodies, as well as our trash, viruses and diseases, and countless poisonous chemicals and other materials—all without complaint. You courageously work to transform everything given to you—even if it takes millions of years—so that life may continue to manifest in new forms. We promise to learn from you to stop

running from our suffering, and instead, to recognize, embrace and transform it. Only by stopping to understand our suffering can we heal and touch true happiness, and, at the same time, restore your beauty and freshness.

You have been calling to us, and some of us have heard your pain. You have been asking us for many lifetimes whether you can count on us. Tonight, with palms joined and with one heart, we say, "Yes, Mother, you can count on us." We shall practice for you and for all our ancestors so that joy, peace and harmony will become possible again.

Please accept our offerings of incense, flowers, and our love. Allow us, dear Mother, to touch the Earth deeply before you three times.