



**Light in the Dark**  
Susan Bauer-Wu,  
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[Let this Darkness Be A Bell Tower](#)

Quiet friend who has come so far,  
feel how your breathing makes more space around you.  
Let this darkness be a bell tower  
and you the bell. As you ring,  
what batters you becomes your strength.  
Move back and forth into the change.  
What is it like, such intensity of pain?  
If the drink is bitter, turn yourself to wine.  
In this uncontainable night,  
be the mystery at the crossroads of your senses,  
the meaning discovered there.  
And if the world has ceased to hear you,  
say to the silent earth: I flow.  
To the rushing water, speak: I am.  
--Rainer Maria Rilke Sonnets to Orpheus II, 29

Winter solstice is next week, dark year behind us.

Reflections on this theme from 4 insights/teachings of Buddhist wisdom:

1. Seeing Clearly
2. Impermanence
3. Bodhisattva's vow
4. Sangha

### Seeing clearly

- a. Mindfulness: seeing things as they are, in their fullness, without filter and judgment
- b. Night sky
- c. Billions of lights sparkling across humanity in every moment; Jack Kornfield in recent MLI podcast (billion act of kindness)
- d. Muddy pond: yes, there's a muddy pond and there's a beautiful lotus
- a. Our bodies: both/and what's right/working well along with what's not.
- b. Same with our lives

### Impermanence (reframe)

- a. Rather than loss and incremental death, see it as Flow
- b. Continuous creation or regeneration of every moment

### Bodhisattva's vow

Bodhisattva: (Sattva=sentient being, Bodhi=enlightenment)

Mahayana Buddhism: Bodhisattva is a wise, awakened one who has generated bodhicitta, which is a compassionate mind for the benefit of all sentient beings.

From the Bodhisattva Vow, by Shantideva (8th century in India)

The Mahayana tradition's Bodhisattva can be said to be the ultimate conclusion of the Buddhist understanding of the oneness of all sentient consciousness and the path of compassion.

The bodhisattva vow (23 parts to it) is the path of exchange of self and others -- in the deepest compassion, the individual takes on the suffering of all sentient existence, and in exchange brings enlightenment to the whole.

17. May I be a protector for those who are without protectors, a guide for travelers, and a boat, a bridge, and a ship for those who wish to cross over!

18. May I be a lamp for those who seek light, a bed for those who seek rest, and may I be a servant for all beings who desire a servant.

19. To all sentient beings may I be a wish-fulfilling gem, a vase of good fortune, an efficacious mantra, a great medication, a wish-fulfilling tree, and a wish-granting cow.

20. Just as earth and other elements are useful in various ways to innumerable sentient beings dwelling throughout infinite space,

21. So may I be in various ways, a source of life for the sentient beings present throughout space until they are liberated.

## Sangha

- a. Light in the collective.
- b. Thich Nhat Hanh: "Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened...Happiness never decreases by being shared."

Henri Nouwen [quote](#) (Dutch Catholic priest & theologian 1932-1996)

*Often we want to be able to see into the future. We say, "How will next year be for me? Where will I be five or ten years from now? There are no answers to these questions. Mostly we have just enough light to see the next step: what we have to do in the coming hour or the following day.*

*The art of living is to enjoy what we can see and not complain about what remains in the dark. When we are able to take the next step with the trust that we will have enough light for the step that follows, we can walk through life with joy and be surprised at how far we go. Let's rejoice in the little light we carry and not ask for the great beam that would take all shadows away.*