INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPROACHING DEATH

Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche

Knowing that the death of Tom Crow, a long-time saṅgha member and early student of the Vidyādhara, was imminent, Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche recorded the following message. It was played during Tom’s transition and at his Sukhāvatī ceremony.

Hello Tom, this is Rinpoche. I’m sending this message. I want to share a few things with you. As you know, no one on this earth is permanent. We all change, we all die. So it’s not just you who will die. Also, we don’t know when death will come. But no matter what, death will come. And perhaps this so-called death is coming to you. So maybe it is important you hear some of these messages.

Do not consider death as an end, that this is coming to an end. Instead, think that this is just the beginning. Yes, there is going to be change, but there is also a continuation. Now it is time to take the bodhisattva vow, no matter what—in this life, next life, and the bardo. Take a vow that you will do all you can to enlighten, to awaken sentient beings. Generate this determination again and again.

And sometimes think of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, think of buddhas and bodhisattvas. You can do it even more vividly than in the past. So take this opportunity and make some effort. You should not feel that you have things that you need to finish. You have done everything in this life. There is nothing to worry about. There is nothing to complete or nothing to finish. Do not be attached to your surroundings. Instead, look forward to a greater endeavor.

When the time of separation between your body and the mind comes, everything will become different. Everything will be vivid. Therefore, everything may appear to be abnormal, not normal. Probably you will experience extreme light, extreme sound, or many other uncertain myriad visions of beings, of environments such as cliff, such as typhoon, such as thundering. No matter what, just remember that this is all a projection of your mind. All this experience is due to the separation of your body and the mind.

Instead, keep on taking the bodhisattva vow, that you will never rest till all sentient beings are awakened, again and again. Generate love and compassion towards yourself and towards everyone. Take this opportunity. Take this opportunity to look into yourself. This is one of the most precious opportunities. So make use of this opportunity fully.