



## Why Not Be Ready?, by Tenzin Palmo

Our everyday life is our spiritual life. If we have awareness to be able to use our everyday life as practice, then our lives have meaning. Otherwise, the days go by--impermanence, as we know--moment to moment to moment, day after day, year after year, and suddenly, there we are, faced with death, and what have we done? We don't know when we are going to die. Every breath we take could be our last breath: we don't know. When we wake up in the morning, we should say, "How amazing that I lasted this whole day and I haven't died yet." Who knows when we'll die? We honestly don't know. All these people killed in accidents on the road--did they think they were going to die? Death comes without respect for age or success or beauty or health. When we go, we go. So we have to live each day as if it were our last. If we really thought, "Tomorrow, I'm going to die," what would we do with today? Surely we would really start to re-evaluate our whole situation.

Once when I was in my cave, there was a raging blizzard and I was snowed in. The blizzard blew seven days and seven nights non-stop and the cave was completely covered. When I opened the window, there was just a sheet of ice; when I opened the door, there was a sheet of ice. I thought, "This is it," because the cave was very small and I would surely run out of oxygen and die. So I got myself all ready [...] and I went through my life. I regretted the things I had done wrong, and I rejoiced in the things I had done right. It was very salutary because I really believed that I only had a day or two left at most. It really put things into perspective--what was important and what was not important; what was important for me to think and what was totally irrelevant for me to think. Normally our minds are filled with non-stop chatter, the running commentary of totally useless soap-opera dialogue that we present to ourselves. But when we believe we've only got a limited amount of time to keep thinking, we become very discriminating in our thoughts, and much more conscious of how we're using our time and of what we're doing with our mind.

If we live thinking that each day is our last, it helps us appreciate each moment. This is not being fatalistic or gloomy. If this was our last day on earth, we would be careful of our time. We wouldn't create more problems; we would try to solve the problems we already have. We'd be nice to people. If we're not going to see them again, why not be nice to them? Wouldn't we be kind to our family, our children, our partners, and the people that we're leaving, if we thought we were never going to see them again? Because, who knows? We might not. One day, we won't.

Why not be ready?

-- Tenzin Palmo, excerpted from "Into the Heart of Life" [1]

Links:

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[1] <http://tenzinpalmo.com/shop/>

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