



## A Letter from IMS's Teachers

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your interest in attending our Three-Month Retreat. As you know, this course is a special time for practice. It is a rare opportunity to deepen the powers of concentration, wisdom and compassion.

Based on the meditation instructions of Mahasi Sayadaw and supplemented by a range of skillful means, the course will encourage a balanced attitude of relaxation and alertness, and the continuity of practice based on the Buddha's Four Foundations of Mindfulness. In addition, the meditations on the four *Brahma Viharas* (lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity) will be offered throughout the retreat. Ongoing guidance for all participants will include evening discourses five nights each week, guided meditations weekly and daily opportunities for questions about practice. In addition, every meditator will be assigned to a pair of teachers; you will then meet individually with one of these teachers every two or three days.

Noble silence is a powerful component of your retreat. We ask that you refrain from visual, verbal and written communication with each other. This helps cultivate the precious gifts of refuge and solitude, even while practicing with up to 100 others. We encourage you to be mindful of sound – to take care with the noise of movement, opening and closing doors, mealtimes and all other general activities.

From our many years of experience, both in practice and in teaching, we have found reading, writing, receiving and sending mail, and making phone calls to be great hindrances to the continuity of mindfulness necessary for deepening insight. We ask that you not engage in these activities, except in an emergency situation. Please make arrangements for someone outside the retreat to handle any necessary communications on your behalf, prior to your arrival at IMS.

Since intensive meditation practice can be a powerful (and, at times, stressful) experience, in a setting that is removed from your normal support system, it is essential that you have a clear understanding of what will be expected of you. It is also important that we have as clear a background as possible for each person attending so that we can offer the most supportive guidance for each individual. This is why your completion of the Retreatant Questionnaire was a necessary part of the registration process for this retreat. The information you have given us will help assure that your time here will be as beneficial to you as possible; it will be kept in the strictest confidence and destroyed at the end of the course.

We ask that you carefully read the enclosed information to help you prepare. Again, we appreciate your interest and welcome your participation in this unique opportunity to deepen your understanding of the dharma.

Sincerely,

Joseph Goldstein, Carol Wilson & Guy Armstrong  
On behalf of the Three-Month Retreat teaching team