

## RELEASING LIFE

September 27, 2011

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Last Saturday I had the privilege of attending an empowerment by the Venerable Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche. This took place in Columbus, Ohio at the KTC (Karma Thegsum Chöling) dharma center. A Tibetan Buddhist empowerment (for those of you who may be unfamiliar with this term) is a ceremony in which the empowering master administers a particular quality directly to those present – an initiation. The Tibetan word for empowerment is “wang,” which literally means “power,” so that kind of says it all.

This particular empowerment was for the deity Amitayus (which means “infinite life”) and his qualities, and this is one of several Tibetan rituals for longevity – long life. This type of ritual empowerment requires that all present have taken ‘refuge’ from the day-to-day world of cyclical existence in the Buddha, his teachings (the dharma), and those who actually can transmit these teachings. The Refuge Ceremony is a separate ritual that simply signifies a person’s intent to take the Buddha, his teachings, and those who carry these teachings to heart. For those who had not taken Refuge, this ceremony was offered at the beginning of the empowerment. Quite a few requested it.

After the empowerment, Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche asked that those present do their very best to in some way try to save the life of other sentient beings, in particular those too helpless to help themselves. In particular, one of the ways this can be done is to free lives that otherwise would be lost. Depending on the climate, some of the ways this is done is to purchase fish, birds, and so on from pet or bait shops and release them. Another is to save dogs and cats from being put down at the local dog pound.



As a sign of their sincerity, members of the dharma center visited a local bait shop and purchased quite a large quantity of earthworms from the shop with the intention of releasing them back into the wild rather than see them used as bait. Before these worms were released Khenpo Rinpoche blessed them with anointed water and by blowing on them lightly. Here is a photo of Khenpo Rinpoche blessing the worms. They were later released, free to go on with their lives.