



# Gay Buddhist Fellowship

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the Gay men's community. It is a forum that brings together the diverse Buddhist traditions to address the spiritual concerns of Gay men in the Bay Area, the United States, and the world. GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

## Generating Compassion: The Practice of Tonglen

*Michael P. McManus, a former bodyguard/interpreter for General Colin Powell, has been a practicing Buddhist for 16 years. A former monk with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, McManus is currently at Stanford University pursuing a Ph.D. in Buddhist Psychology. He spoke to GBF on April 4, 2000.*

Good morning – almost afternoon here. I want to thank each of you for coming up. This is my first chance to get to speak to everybody here, and it's good to see so many people.

A bit of background on myself. I started studying Buddhism back in 1984 when I was in high school. I was taking some honors courses my senior year at high school at a university near where I was living. Afterwards I would speak with the philosophy and psychology students just about life, and they said, "Oh, you have a very Buddhist outlook on life. Are you Buddhist?" I said, "Actually, I'm Catholic." The only view of Buddhism I had at that time was the little fat statue and burning incense. Other than that, I had no clue. They said, "Your outlook on life is very Buddhist; you should read some books about it." So I did my own investigation and said, "Well, this Buddha guy had it on. This is the way I think; this is quite interesting." Then after graduation from high school, I went into the military and was stationed in Germany, where I had the opportunity, living about half an hour from the French border, to go into Dordogne, France, where two Tibetan lamas were teaching. At the time, I just thought they were two really cool lamas. One was Dudre Rinpoche; the other was Dicho Tense Rinpoche. (Laughter). Later I found that they're probably two of the greatest lamas of our century. To me, they were just really cool teachers that I got to learn a lot from. And so I had my practices which they gave me to do, and I just followed that through.

In 1996, I was teaching in Thailand, and after my year contract was up, I just had a feeling that I should go to India to see the Dalai Lama and see if I could get some meditation instruction or something. When I was there, the next thing I knew, I had made the choice to become a monk. And people say, "Oh, that's such a big life-changing choice! Did you really have to think about?" I said, "No. It was like waking up and putting on a pair of underwear. It was that routine of a choice that I made." To make a long story short, the next thing I realized, I was in front of the Dalai Lama being ordained as a monk, and stayed that way for just

