Then we imagine that Buddha Amitabha is present in front of us, attended by Avalokiteshvara on the right and Vajrapani on the left. Amitabha, the Buddha of Limitless Light, is red. He wears the traditional monastic robes, sits in lotus posture with his hands in meditation position holding the traditional mendicant's bowl. For us, he represents mind nature, the clear, empty knowing that is present in all experience. He also embodies compassion, the wish that all sentient beings find a relationship with life that allows them to be completely at peace, whatever they encounter in life. Avalokiteshvara, he who sees the pain of the world, and Vajrapani, the embodiment of power, appear as bodhisattvas, the former white in color, the latter blue. They represent how mind nature takes expression in life, as infinite compassion on the one hand, and as the power of fearlessness on the other.

Recite the mantra for Limitless Light a number of times, feeling your own yearning to be completely at peace with your life. Then light a candle, think of the deceased and say the prayer of guidance. The lighted candle symbolizes the clarity of mind nature that enables us to be at peace in the turmoil of our own reactivity and confusion. The lotus bud symbolizes buddha nature, the potential for awakening that unfolds naturally when the conditions are right. Here you are praying for the spiritual welfare of the deceased, praying that he or she recognizes mind nature and thus finds peace and freedom from the confusion of emotional reactions.

Then, bring the flame of a candle to the photograph of the deceased. The flame represents timeless awareness in its five aspects: presence, balance, discernment, effective action and completeness.

In today's world, we often do not see the actual body of this person who meant so much to us. With the burning of the photograph, we recognize clearly that the physical connection is no more. While the photograph burns, recite *The Heart Sutra*, which speaks to the emptiness of all experience.

PRAYER OF GUIDANCE

(Light candles and hold while repeating this prayer. Afterwards, place the candles on the shrine.)

om ah hum

In this sacred and joyful setting, Realm of Joy,
Our family has gathered,
Brought together by noble wishes made long ago.

Here we present beautiful offerings, real and imagined,
And to them we add our profound thoughts of good will and well-being.
Great good and understanding come from these thoughts
And give power to these wishes we make.

When those close to us die and they see
The bewildering projections of confusion in the intermediate state,
May they recognize the unity of experience and awareness,
The mother and son clear light.
May they find a path free from fear, panic, and alarm
And be received by Lord Limitless Light
With his retinue of bodhisattvas.

Free from the threats and distress of ordinary existence,
May they be born in a lotus bud and meet the Buddha
In the lotus land of the Realm of Joy.
Receiving guidance, may they complete all the stages of the bodhisattva path,
Come to full awakening and develop the ability
To help all beings without discrimination become free of pain.

May this light that shines with the brilliance of intelligence and awareness
Clear away the darkness of conditioning, confusing emotions, and the distortions of reactions and concepts.
May it illumine the path of total purity
And reveal the way to a never-fading joy.