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# AZBT Newsletter

## Refuge Ceremony

Under precious and wonderful causes and conditions, on May 25, after the first day of the thousand Buddha Confession Ceremony, Ven. Ta-Yu held a special Refuge Ceremony.

Three people-- Larry, Gary and Jason - attended the Ceremony and took the refuge. Jason is only one and a half years old. This is the first Refuge Ceremony since Vairocana Monastery has been established. It indicates the seed of Buddha Dharma has already sprouted gradually in the west. We hope in the future, there are more western people studying Buddhism, so that the Buddha Dharma will spread to every corner and become a worldwide religion and belief.

At the end, Ven. Ta-Yu reminded all refuge takers to practice Buddha Dharma in their daily lives and cultivate the Bodhisattva's path until reaching the perfect Buddhahood.

## The Bathing Buddha Ceremony

On May 11, close to 10 a.m., people arrived at the Temple one after another. It was very special that the members of The Buddhist Association of Central Pennsylvania came from State College in the early morning to join the Bathing Buddha Ceremony.

It was our second Bathing Buddha Ceremony since establishing Vairocana Monastery. Looking at the significant growth of our Temple in these two years, everybody is joyful and grateful. We believe that with

everybody's support and joint participation, we are going to have the Bathing Buddha Ceremony every year and practice Dharma everyday.



Together with the Bathing Buddha Ceremony, we also held the Diamond Confession Ceremony. Having young Bodhisattvas from the State College made our chanting beautiful and lively.



In the spring, it is very pretty at Vairocana Monastery. The dogwood near the front door, dressing up with pink flowers, surprised everyone. After the ceremonies, we took pictures in the front yard. The isolating board at the front door, finished lately by Mr. Richard Lee, was everybody's best love. We watched everybody leaving in the light and soft evening wind.



## Replying an E-mail From a Friend

Ven. Ta-Yu

*Thank you kindly for your swift response. I am very interested in visiting and learning, however right now I work evenings until 11pm. Is there a time in the morning or early afternoon before 3 pm that I may visit? Maybe just to see your temple?*

*I am very new to Buddhism, and I don't know where to begin. Currently I am reading "The Art of Happiness" by the Dalai Lama and Howard Cutler, MD, and I feel a very strong connection to what I am reading.*

*Also, I am experiencing financial hardship and will not be able to donate money or spend money on programs. So I am hoping that there are meditations and things to learn without spending money right now. (Just a fear carried over from the Catholic donation basket being passed out during Sunday mass.)*

Thank you again,

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Dear Friend:

After I read your email, I was thinking for a long time. There may be some other people who have the same worry and fear as you. So, I decided to share your email with the public. I hope you do not mind.

It is really not easy to run a Buddhist Temple, especially in America.

There are two required elements, software and hardware, to accomplish a Buddhist Temple. The software is the programs and activities to spread the pure Dharma. The hardware is the facilities and daily supports to keep the Temple functional. These two elements are needed and a Temple cannot be accomplished if lacking either one of them. If you have a magnificent Temple and facilities, but no activity or anyone to spread the pure Dharma, then, what is the use of the Temple? On the other hand, having somebody who is able to teach good Dharma, but no Temple or facilities where he can teach, then, it is also hopeless.

In your email, you mentioned that there is a fear carried over from the Catholic donation basket being passed around during Sunday mass. As a religious worker, I do not have any comments on their method of collecting donations. But, in this way, they are able to spread their doctrine without worrying about their financial support. However, in Buddhism, we accept and follow whatever the conditions are, which has led to great difficulties in running a Buddhist Temple here in America.

Buddhists always focus on accepting and following the conditions, especially on the donations. If you mention too much about donations, people will condemn you from time to time that saying your six roots (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind) are impure and you do not have good practice. Some people, based on their wild wisdom, say that accumulating merits has nothing to do with achieving enlightenment. What they do not know is that even the Buddha taught us the famous story that: "Accumulating merits without practicing wisdom, the elephant wears ornaments with precious jewels. Practicing wisdom without accumulating merits, Arhat holds his empty bowl without any offering." Only when we practice merits and wisdom equally, will we be able to achieve the perfect Buddhahood.

I wrote so much, but it is only a tiny bit of the Buddha Dharma. Please find time to come here and get to know Buddhism. I am very willing to share my experience in practicing Buddhism with you.

Best wishes for you,

Ven. Ta-Yu, President  
American Zen Buddhist Temple  
Vairocana Monastery



*Lamp Offering for The Medicine Buddha Confession Ceremony on April 27, 2002.*

## Samadhi Water Confession Ceremony in BACP

Shirley Hsi

On Sunday May 5, Ta-Yu Fa-Shi led us in chanting the "Samadhi-Water Confession Ceremony" together. It was the first time we held a whole day ceremony. It was also the first time we chanted this particular Sutra, and everyone was really into the spirit of the Sutra and felt uplifted. I hope you find the experience gratifying and fulfilling. Thanks to Ta-Yu Fa-Shi who made it possible.

We also welcomed Jeannie Chen from Shrewsbury, Ma. who accompanied Ta-Yu Fa-Shi and assisted with the ceremony. Her enthusiasm and commitment for Giving Dharma were admired by all.

Jeffrey Huang, another old friend of ours, also made the trip from Albany, New York. Welcome back, as always.

# The Story of Samadhi Water Confessoin Ceremony

Jeffrey Huang

In the Tang dynasty of ancient China, there was a monk, Ven. Wu-Da, who had practiced Dharma for many lifetimes and attained a profound understanding of Buddha's teaching. He, at a certain age, was the Dharma master of the emperor. The emperor frequently sought guidance from him concerning the ways to run the country.



When Ven. Wu-Da was young in the monastery there lived a monk who sadly suffered from a severe skin disease. As a consequence of the unpleasant smell and appearance, no one else in the monastery was willing to take care of him or even come close to him except Ven. Wu-Da. He continued helping the sick monk until his full recovery. To reward Ven. Wu-Da, the revived monk told Ven. Wu-Da that: "In the future if you encounter a dangerous, life-threatening event, you must be patient and try to find me in a monastery located west of China, between two distinct tall pine trees on a high mountain. There, your problem will be solved."

Several years passed and Ven. Wu-Da became a high-ranking monk and the Dharma master of the emperor. One

time, he was honored by the emperor and awarded in public with the gift of a Dharma seat, a very pretty and valuable seat made of sandalwood. Immediately after he received the gift from the emperor, he had a thought in his mind that: "I must have cultivated the practice of Dharma very well and impressed the emperor and others ... that is why I got this gift."

As soon as he had this thought his knee rapidly grew the image of a man's face with a skin-infection that looked extremely terrifying. It was unknown why it suddenly appeared on his knee. The diseased face also demanded food and drink, causing him both physical pain and spiritual distraction.

One day Ven. Wu-Da remembered the conversation he had years ago with the sick monk he took care of in the monastery. He followed the recovered monk's advice and went in search of the monastery. He finally found it. After he understood his suffering, the monk pointed to a water spring and told him that he could use the spring water to wash away the image. The next morning, a child led Ven. Wu-Da to the water spring. As he was ready to wash his infected knee with the spring water, the image of the man's face opened its mouth and started speaking, it said, "Wait! Before you wash me with the water, let me tell you why I embedded into your knee. A long time ago, when both of us were famous state counselors for the emperor, I was forced to be executed by the emperor because my advice to the emperor on how to solve the state crisis was opposite of yours. You were so cruel at that time to tell the King that only by killing me the country would be saved. So you contributed indirectly to my death. Since my execution, I became a spirit and always surrounded you to try to find the best opportunity to carry out my revenge for ten lifetimes. However, because you have been practicing Dharma so well, with no detachment from Buddha's teaching and constantly watched and demonstrated your

## Coming Events

*Every Tuesday*  
7:00 p.m.  
**Group Meditation**  
Ven. Ta-Yu

7/14/02, *Sunday*  
10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
**Patience**  
Ven. Lama Migmar

7/27/02, *Saturday*, 10 a.m. –  
7/28/02, *Sunday*, 12 p.m.  
**One Day Pure Land Retreat**  
**(Eight Precepts)**  
Ven. Ta-Yu

8/11/02, *Sunday*  
10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
**Dharma Talk**  
Joan Wai

8/31/02, *Saturday*  
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
**Earth-womb**  
**Confession Ceremony**  
**Great Mong Sam ceremony**  
Ven. Ta-Yu

9/8/02, *Sunday*  
10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
**Buddhism and Daily Life**  
Charles Chen

9/21/02, *Saturday*  
10 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
9/22/02, *Sunday*  
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
**Thousand-Buddha**  
**Confession Ceremony**  
**Future - Stars Era**  
Ven. Ta-Yu

10/13/02, *Sunday*  
10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
**Patience**  
Ven. Lama Migmar

10/26/02, *Saturday*, 10 a.m. –  
10/27/02, *Sunday*, 12 p.m.  
**One Day Pure Land Retreat**  
**(Eight Precepts)**  
Ven. Ta-Yu

awareness of your thought, speech, and action, I never got a chance to retaliate. In this life, I finally found a chance to hit you back...the precious opportunity came when you were proud of yourself thinking that you must practice the Dharma so well that a Dharma seat was awarded to you from the emperor. At that moment, I was able to implant myself into your knee and carry out my revenge.”

After hearing the story described by the facial image on his knee, Ven. Wu-Da was shocked and finally understood the origin of his suffering. The story ends with Ven. Wu-Da washing his knee and face disappearing resulting in total relief.

We appreciated Ven Ta-Yu telling us the origin of the story that led to the Samadhi Water Confession Ceremony. She gave us an opportunity again to see how things are governed by the law of cause and effect.

*(Side note: the skin-infected monk whom Ven. Wu-Da took care of was actually a Bodhisattva who had transformed himself into a monk to help Ven. Wu-Da.)*

## The Sound of Dharma

May 6, in response to the generous invitation of Rev. Wayne of Swiftwater and Keokee Chapel United Methodist Churches, Ven. Ta-Yu appointed Jeannie Chen to represent Vairocana Monastery (America Zen Buddhist Temple), to speak about Buddhism. About thirty people attended and praised her brief, yet wonderful, speech.

Seeing the importance and the needs of religion in purifying people’s minds, Rev. Wayne organized a Forum on World Religions and invited representatives from various religions to introduce and share their beliefs with the audience. Because Vairocana Monastery is the only Buddhist Temple in the area, Rev.

Wayne visited our Temple several times inviting Ven. Ta-Yu to join the Forum. Due to Rev. Wayne’s sincere invitation and the opportunity to spread Buddha Dharma, Ven. Ta-Yu accepted the invitation.

On that night cars one by one parked at the Church’s parking lot. At 7 p.m., first, Rev. Wayne introduced Ven. Ta-Yu and the speaker, Jeannie Chen, to everybody. After that, the abundant Dharma speech started.

Jeannie shared the Buddha Dharma based on her many years of practice. She introduced the life of Skyamuni Buddha, the three jewels (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), interdependent origination and the nature of emptiness, the methods of practicing and how to apply Buddhism in our daily lives. In a short time, about one hour, her speech brought great interest and observations from the audiences. Through this opportunity, we hope to clear away people’s misunderstanding of Buddhism, promote our role in the community and help the spread of Buddha Dharma in America.

## Joan Wai’s Insight About Buddhism

Joan Wai is a sincere Buddhist laywoman practitioner, who has worked in news and press fields for many years in America. She has varied life experiences, holds a BA in Chinese literature and is the President of Youth Buddhism Communication, Inc. She has been a reporter for America Chinese newspapers, radio and TV, and is the head editor of the Youth Buddhism Communication, Inc. She has also hosted many Buddhist programs at the radio station.

Supporting Buddhism and protecting the truth is her vow. In July 2001, she organized the Youth Buddhism Communication’s visit. There were about a hundred people joined the trip and visited our Temple.

This year, on August 11, we are very

honored to invite Joan Wai, who is going to share her insight about Buddhism with us.

## The Buddhism

Jorge Luis Borges

Translated by Miin-Ron Lin

## The Nirvana

What signifies arriving to the nirvana? Simply, that our actions no longer throw shadows. While we are in this world, we are subject to the Karma. Each one of our actions intertwines with that mental structure that is called Karma. When we have arrived to the Nirvana our actions already do not project shadow, we are free. Saint Augustin said that when we are saved we do not have to think in the good or the bad. We will continue to do the good, without thinking in it.

What is Nirvana? A good part of the attention that the Buddhism has raised in the West is because of this beautiful word. It appears impossible that the word Nirvana does not contain something previous. What is the Nirvana, literally? It is extinction, extinguishing. *(Editor’s Note: Nirvana is explained as extinguish the fire of defilement, such as greed, anger and ignorance. It is the elimination of egoism and free from the cyclic existence. In Mahayana Buddhism, there is no separation between the cyclic existence and Nirvana.)* An Austrian Orientalist notes that Buddha used the physics of the time, and the idea of extinction was not then the same as now: because it was thought that a flame, once extinguished, did not disappear. It is thought that the flame continued to live, that it last in another state, and saying Nirvana did not signify necessarily the extinction. It can signify that we continue in a different way, in a way unknown to us. In general, the metaphors of the mystics are ominous metaphors, but those of the Buddhists are different. When one talks about the Nirvana,

one does not talk about the wine of the Nirvana or about the rose of the Nirvana or about the embrace of the Nirvana. One may compare it to an island, with a stable island in the middle of the storms. One may compare it with a high tower; one can compare with a garden, also. It is something exists on his own account, beyond us.

What I have said today is fragmented. It would have been absurd that I could expound a doctrine to which I have dedicated so many years – and about which I have understood little, really – with the intention of showing a piece of a museum. To me Buddhism is not a piece of the museum: it is a road of salvation. Not only for me, but for millions of men, it is the most widely

spread religion of the world and I believe to have treated it with the utmost respect in expounding it tonight.

----- The End -----

*(Excerpted and translated by Miin-Ron Lin, December 2, 2000)*

## The Enlightened Garden

Ven. Ta-Yu

Translated by Jeannie Chen

Edited by Betsy Pross



### It Is Also Compassion



A little deer quietly came in front of the window.

Everyday, near sunset, the little deer shows up in front of the window. At first I didn't understand that my presence scared him. Once I understood, I stopped in the middle of my work cleaning the shrine table. As he lowered his head and was eating the tender grass, I slowly knelt down. However, his keen eyes still noticed my careful movements from the other side of the window. He lifted his head and scaredly looked around with a full mouth of green grass.

I continued to wait until he relaxed and lowered his head to enjoy his unfinished dinner.

Just like that, we were there. One was the inside and the other outside the window, playing hide and seek. It was not easy, but finally I hid myself behind the window without disturbing him. It is a fawn. Watching him, relaxed and comfortably having his meal, I silently prayed for him in my heart to grow up peacefully without harm from hunters or cars.

As Buddhist practitioners, it is very important to generate and increase our compassion. How do we cultivate compassion? It cannot be achieved simply by studying profound Sutra and Buddhist text or relying on sitting with our eyes closed and our knees bent. It should be practiced in our daily lives --- in every moment, in all actions, within our minds and our daily activities, such as walking, standing, sitting, and sleeping.

There is a clause in "Great Prajna Paramita Sastra" (a commentary ascribed to Nagarjuna on the Great Parjna Paramita Sutra): "Great loving kindness gives happiness to all sentient beings; Great compassion removes suffering away from all sentient beings."

Ordinarily, we feel that the compassion helps the public with great generosity and loving kindness. In fact, the merit is even more profound and wide from a pure and virtuous action arising naturally from our minds without any names and forms. A compassionate person knows how to apply the theory of giving, which is to empty the three wheels in his mind. While performing compassionate actions, there is no concept of self, who is compassionate, there is no perception of others, who receive benefit, and there is no attachment to the compassionate actions and their results. If we are able to generate and practice compassionate actions toward all sentient beings and non-sentient beings without any preconditions and attachments, then we are truly practicing the Bodhisattva's deeds.

Once we are truly able to practice compassion in our daily lives, then there is compassion everywhere and in every moment. The compassion is there in every place all the time.

It is compassionate to lightly pick up the dropped flowers from the ground, put them into a small container with some water and let them peacefully blossom to their last bloom. It is also compassionate to bury an unknown dead insect lying under the grass, recite the Buddha name for him and dedicate the merit to wish him reborn in a superior realm. Isn't it also compassionate to let the little deer outside the window comfortably finish his meal undisturbed?

Some Small things, looking too worthless to mention in our lives, may become the turning point for us to practice Bodhisattva's deeds. Practitioners should not be unaware of small things in their daily lives.

The little deer finished his dinner and slowly walked down hill. I watched him disappear into the forest.