

Inside this Issue

- 1** The Notice of 2005 Schedule Change
Taking The Precepts
- 2** The Teaching on Great Compassion Ceremony
- 3** The Teaching on The Thousand-Buddha Ceremony
Coming Events
- 4** The Enlightened Garden
– A Part of Life

American Zen Buddhist Temple
Vairocana Monastery
RR3 Box 3361
Cresco, PA 18326
Tel & Fax: (570) 895-4600
Email: azbt@evenlink.com
www.evenlink.com/~azbtnews



The Notice of 2005 Schedule Change

Venerable Ta Yu

The Meditation Class every Tuesday night is always popular with the local population since the Vairocana Monastery was established in 2000. Although meditation during the evening is tranquil and the schedule of the Meditation Class is convenient for the people who work from 9 to 5 but it also has its drawbacks. Because of Vairocana Monastery is located in the rural area, winter is long and cold plus frequent snow storms that created numerous inconvenience and dangerous driving conditions for the meditators to come. Classes were cancelled many times

After serious considerations, we decided to reschedule Tuesday night's Meditation Class to Sundays at 10:00 a.m. starting May 2005. A brief Dharma Talk will be given by the Masters or sometimes our senior experienced practitioners will share their attainment experiences with the attendees after the class. The traditional ceremonies and service in Chinese would be scheduled on Saturdays if possible. One-Day Zen Retreat and One-Day Pure Land Retreat are scheduled from Saturday 10:00 a.m. to Sunday 10:00 a.m. then the Meditation Class will be started right after that. If the Sunday is for Lama Migmar's teaching then we will schedule Lama's teaching in that Sunday only.

AZBT Newsletter

Unavoidably, this schedule change would be questioned by some people at the beginning. We sincerely request everybody's cooperation and pardon for the inconvenience. Please visit our website at any time for our new schedule. Thank you.



The Great Compassionate Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva

Taking The Precepts

Leona J. Maury

On Saturday, December 11, 2004, I again asked and received the 8 Precepts from Venerable Ta Yu. The very first time I received the Precepts was 1987 at the Rochester Zen Center in New York. Each time I receive the Precepts I feel the same excitement. Somewhat like the arrival of spring after a long harsh winter. I feel cleansed, a renewal of life and faith, a deepening commitment to do better and to treat all sentient beings with love, compassion and wisdom.

Taking the Precepts is a promise I make to my Lord Buddha and myself to follow His teachings for the good

of all sentient beings. I've been reborn into the human realm, which gives me the opportunity and wisdom to practice. And although I may not have completely broken the Precepts, I'm sure I've put a good dent in a few of them. Renewing the Precepts reminds me to try harder to become a better person.



Sunrise at AZBT

With practice over the years, the Precepts become a way of life. They become a part of you like you breathe. You do it. You don't think about it. You breathe. You follow the teachings of our Lord Buddha and you and all sentient beings are better for it physically, emotionally and spiritually.

The Teaching on Great Compassion Ceremony

Taught by Venerable Ta Yu
Translated by Wendy Wu

February 28, 2004

Some people said: "Practice should be accompanied by some sicknesses." You will understand what the suffering is when you are sick. If the Pure-Land practitioners want to practice well, then they should abandon the Saha World. Even though you had recited Amitabha's

name for all your lifetime, it is still not easy for you to be reborn in the Western Pure-Land if you cling very much to the fame and profit in this world.

Sickness is one of the Eight Distresses in Buddha's teaching. You will not be compassionate if you have not experience any sufferings. While you are suffering by the sickness, it is easy to relate the same type of suffering happened on other sentient beings. It is certainly very painful even happened on an animal. All of these are the unfavorable situations, which stimulate our practice. We should not ask for a smooth practice. There will be some obstructions if we want to have a smooth practice. It is just the starting point of our practice when we bump into some obstacles.

Someone once said: "There are holes and it is uneven on the surface of the earth." Many people thought, what should we do? One person said: "It doesn't matter. I will buy a lot of carpets to cover the surface of the earth." If you were the one who had bumped into this problem, what would you do to resolve it? Would you buy lots of carpets to cover the surface of the earth? Or, would you have some other ways? If you would buy lots of carpets, then the surface of the earth wouldn't be all covered up until you were getting old because it is not a small area. There is a simplest way. As long as you remember to put a pair of shoes on your feet and wear those shoes well then nothing will happen while walking.

When there are some problems in your life, for example, your boss didn't treat you right; your family member didn't treat you well; your classmate didn't treat you nice, this is the time that you should remember to put your shoes on. If you want to

change others and want others to treat you well like the way you want, it is just like covering the surface of the earth with carpets and you will be exhausted. Therefore, the most important thing to a practitioner is to practice on the mind—your Self-Nature. When you tame your mind well, it's just like to put the shoes on your feet. It will protect your feet from getting hurt.

Yesterday, a retired policeman came to our temple. He asked me three questions. One of them is: "I have read many Buddhist books. These books mention the force of Karma and Karma will affect our rebirth. What will be the judge of good or bad Karma?" I said: "The best judge is your mind. Whether you are creating good or bad Karma, it all depends on what you want to do and it all starts from your mind. We cannot see our mind but our mind is everywhere. We create different Karma and different causes and conditions because we have lots of different thoughts."



The Great Compassion Ceremony

No matter what method you practicing on, if you didn't train your mind well, you would not be able to go beyond to a higher level. Our minds are always busy. Before we study any Buddha Dharma we always look outwards. After we study any Buddha Dharma we beg Buddha to bless us this and that. We never ask for ourselves. Only when we ask for ourselves and look inwards, our lives will be

different. The most important thing for Guan-Yin practice is to listen inwards to your Self-Nature. Our Self-Nature is pure by its nature. But, we don't know our Self-Nature is already pure. We don't know we should put our shoes on. Therefore, we have lots of defilements that trap us in the Cyclic Existence. No matter it is a good time or a bad time, we should always have awareness on our way of practice. Don't blame others for their insufficient compassion and wisdom. We should look inwards and ask for ourselves, and then we will have a very happy life. Hope everybody practice diligently while walking on the way of practice.



The Winter Scenery at AZBT

The Teaching on The Thousand-Buddha Ceremony

Taught by Venerable Ta Yu
Translated by Wendy Wu

January 23-24, 2004

The non-Buddhists always say this about Buddhists, "You Buddhists like to pray for opening up the wisdom, getting the blessed merit and attaining the Buddhahood." It is correct that we Buddhists are practicing for the blessed merit and wisdom. If we don't have the blessed merit and wisdom, we cannot attain the

Buddhahood. We are not just praying for the blessed merit and wisdom as our way of practice. It is because Buddhism asserts that "every cause has its effect, as every effect arises from a cause". For example if you plant the seed of Good Roots and Wisdom then you need to take good care of it. You need to use fertilizer and weed to let that seed grow into a tree so that the fruit will grow out of that tree.

There are many people who have Good Roots, it is because that our Buddha-Nature and Dharma-Nature are in one. The Historical Sakyamuni Buddha and the Thousand-Buddha that we worshipped they were all took good care of the seed of Good Roots and wisdom. No matter how many Cyclic Existences that they went through, they always came back as a practitioner. Eventually and they never lost their Bodhi Mind. Their Good Roots and wisdom were finally fused together inseparably. But our Good Roots and wisdom haven't connected together and we are not the Buddhas yet. Therefore, in order to connect our Good Roots and wisdom together we need to come to the temple to practice.



The Meditation Center in the Snow

According to the statistic report of CNN, the year 2003 is the year that most people had died in many natural disasters than the past years. We all wished that the next year would be better than this year. We are always praying for tomorrow or the next year

Coming Events

Every Sunday
10:00 a.m.
Group Meditation
Sharing the Dharma

5/14/05, Saturday
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Bathing Buddha Ceremony
Ven. Ta Yu

6/11/05, Sunday
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Medicine Buddha Confession
Ceremony (Chinese)
Ven. Ta Yu

7/2/05, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. –
7/3/05, Sunday, 10:00 a.m.
One-day Pure-land Retreat
Eight Precepts (Intensive)
Ven. Ta Yu

7/3/05, Sunday
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Release Lives
Ven. Ta Yu

7/4/05, Monday –
7/9/05, Saturday
Yearly Clean Up

8/13/05, Saturday
9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Earth-womb and
Great Mong Sam ceremony
(Chinese)
Ven. Ta Yu

For the latest update of AZBT activities, please visit the website at:
<http://www.evenlink.com/~azbtnews>

although our lives are impermanent. We don't know if we would be here tomorrow or if we would still be here the next year it is because of the changing nature of the "every cause has its effect, as every effect arises from a cause".

The reason why we had so many calamities it is because that we living beings have very heavy karma. Although we living beings have many blessed merits but we do whatever we can to use that blessed merits to benefit ourselves even harming others. There are many strange diseases, for example, the pig produce pig feet disease and the chicken produce the bird flu. CDC will have a news conference to tell us how to prevent the disease as long as any diseases have occurred. The best prevention those diseases is to have a good behavior.

We are very fortunate to have a

rebirth as human beings. It is because we have thought and wisdom so that for we can perceive what is good and what is bad. And those animals had created ignorant karma in their past lives so that they do not have wisdom. But we human beings do whatever we can to harm those animals. What method would the animals use to defend themselves? For example, chicken will produce bird flu if we ate the chicken that had bird flu then we will be infected with the bird flu. This is a reaction of the cause and effect. Every disease is caused by the power of karma of the living beings.

We need good karma in order to come to the temple to prostrate to the Buddhas till our waist sore and back ache that is our blessed merits. There are many people who do not have blessed karmic merit to come to the temple to prostrate to the Buddhas. Obstacles would manifest so that they

don't feel well and they just lying there until their waist sores and back aches. Therefore, in order to become Buddha we need to have blessed merits and wisdom as supplies for our soul. To practice for the blessed merit and wisdom are the most important things to us, we need to practice in each of our lives. Your Karmic Obstruction will be absolved, your Buddha-Nature will be revealed and your blessed merit and wisdom light will come naturally as long as you practice.



The Thousand-Buddha Ceremony

The Enlightened Garden

Ven. Ta Yu

Translated by Wendy Wu
Edited by Toni Kenyon

A Part of Life

It was not a white Christmas this year.

I was in Florida during Christmas. But, I didn't forget to watch the weather reports every morning and evening to monitor the weather conditions in Pennsylvania. Because I wasn't at the temple, I strongly wished that there wouldn't be any snowstorms hitting Pennsylvania. The previous predicament of having nobody to remove the snow still has a deep impression on me. I should really thank the cooperation of the great nature that the weather conditions in Pocono are all very well during that period. But, in the sunshine state, I felt the wind was bone-chilling due to the unusual cold.

After coming back to Pocono, the snowflakes were also streaming in. Several consecutive night of snow made temperature drop rapidly. Clouds seemed to be frozen in the sky because of extremely cold weather. Soon, the residents in Pocono experienced a devastating ice-storm.

Opening the window one morning, I was stunned by the scene outside. The non-stopping freezing rain froze the ground overnight. The parking lot turned into a skating rink. Patrolling the peripheral environment is my daily routine. It was especially unusual that day, the Dogwood and Maple tree in front of the door were covered with a thick layer of

