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



# AZBT Newsletter

## The Bodhisattvas in the Rain

Venerable Ta Yu

Do you still remember last summer that a group of Bodhisattvas from the Buddhist Association of Central Pennsylvania (BAOCP) from Penn State University, who had completed many tasks for the temple in the rain? Yes! That's right! These Bodhisattvas came to the temple again voluntarily to help gardening at the end of this April.

In April, there wasn't any sign of the spring in Pocono yet. But the cold rain and dense fog did not stop their enthusiasm. However, because of the intersection of the interstate highways 80 and 380 was obscured by the dense mountain fog one day, which caused one of the four vehicles of this group to miss the exit, who then turned back after driving all the way to New Jersey; and another vehicle got lost completely and could not get here. What a pity!

We knew that it would rain that day from the weather report. But, they couldn't reschedule due to that the students' final exam schedule. The alternative plan was to recite the Sutra indoor as a group practice in case the inclement weather prevented any outdoor work. Fortunately, the rain was got lighter and lighter so everyone threw a coat on and started gardening in the rain. I don't know whether you have ever seen the scene of planting the flowers while holding an umbrella? This was the scene before noontime.

The flooding of April 2<sup>nd</sup> had washed down the silt from the upstream, which blocked the canal leading the water into the lake. Led by the professor Guo, all the men were clearing up the canal, picking up the fallen leaves, and cut down the branches in the rain. The achievements after working the whole day was that the lake was again filled with water that made it alive again and there were no more obscuring fallen trees so that everybody can appreciate the panoramic view of the lake. Thanks very much to these Bodhisattvas.



*Corner of the Garden*

The skillful aspect of the women could be seen from the arrangement of the flowers and plants. The weeds that had grown for years made everyone pant while weeding them out. Weeding, digging the holes, planting the flowers, and covering the plants with mulch towards the end to prevent the weeds growing, to complete this wonderful work. Everybody's clothes got dirty but the whole monastery was adorned. Hope these diligent achievements will please the body and mind of the practitioners who visit the monastery and let them fill with the joy of the Dharma in this gentle season with flowers dancing in the breeze!

# Activities Sketch

## The Bathing Buddha Ceremony on The Buddha's Birthday

Once a year the Bathing Buddha Ceremony is held on the Buddha's Birthday. This year it was held on May 14 at 10:00 in the morning. There were Americans and Chinese who participated in this ceremony. The brief and fine duo-language Liturgy in Chinese and English fill attendees full of joy in the Dharma.

The day before the Bathing Buddha Ceremony, Kin and Bell bought lots of beautiful flowers to make offering to adorn the temple. Starting from reciting of the Invocation of the Incense Offering, then to sincerely inviting all the Buddhas until the chanting of the Gatha of Praising the Merit of the Buddha, we experience the smooth chanting of the Chinese plus the Americans' intent on the chanting that consisted of a mindful tune with an exquisite melody.



Beautiful Flowers to adorn the Main Shrine

"Next we come forward to bathe Tathagatas, to gain the purity, wisdom, dignity, merit and virtue of all. May the five-fold polluted sentient beings be rid of impurity, and all reach the pure Dharmakaya (Dharma body) of Tathagatas." The ceremony consists of everyone coming to the bathing Buddha table individually. Prostrating three times in front of the Buddha, then kneel down to bathe the Buddha. At that

very moment, everybody's body and mind were purified, Bodhi Mind intensified, and be one with the Buddha.



Pure Bathing Buddha Ceremony

## The Medicine Buddha Confession Ceremony

We were just complained about what a long winter this year, but the summer's footstep heavily stepped on us. The high temperature arrived the eastern America. It seemed that the burning hot air current scorch the earth.

Under the test of such inflammable temperature, the Medicine Buddha Confession Ceremony was still held on schedule in the temple. The candle light of one hundred lamps on the shrine chased away calamities and prayed for good fortune. The flame reflected and reddened all the faces of the laypeople.

Under this test of the severe temperature, everybody's mind did not waver slightly in penitential offering. We prostrated in Part I of the Medicine Buddha Confession Liturgy in the morning and then prostrated during the Part II and Part III of the Liturgy in the afternoon separately. Everybody followed the practice all the way through and everyone's spirit was admirable.

Afterwards, everybody got the Dharma water of Medicine Buddha for the blessing. Practicing in such harsh condition, everybody truthfully displayed the earnest effort of being patient in suffering, knowing the suffering, suppressing the suffering, and resolving the suffering.

## One-Day Pure Land Retreat and Eight Precepts

It may be to make up for suffering in the heat during the Medicine Buddha Confession Ceremony, the weather during the one day and one night for this One-Day Pure Land Retreat and Eight Precepts lets everybody cool down considerably.

The transmission of the Eight Precepts started at 10:00 in the morning. Originally, we should keep silence during the retreat. Because Shu Kyi came up here from Philadelphia and she was going to offer free acupuncture treatments for everybody, we could have appropriate conversation instead of keep silence. Yet, it didn't cause inattentiveness and varied conversation either.

The first session of the One-Day Pure Land Retreat started from 1:30 in the afternoon. We recited the Amitabha Sutra and Praise the Buddha Gatha, then circled the Buddha shrine and did the meditation. Each session was one hour. There were total four sessions in the first day. It ended at 8:30 in the night.

Starting at 5:30 in the morning in the second day was one hour's meditation. Afterwards, we began a short Morning Service in English. Another complete session is after the breakfast. The One-Day Pure Land Retreat and Eight Precepts for one day and one night was completed before 10:00 in the morning.

After completing of the One-Day Pure Land Retreat, it was Sunday's meditation class. Afterwards, Jeannie shared her experience regarding the "Stress Management" which let everybody obtained numerous benefits.

Animal Liberation to save their lives was the most important subject on that day. We used the Releasing Life Fund that donated by everyone from the Medicine Buddha Confession Ceremony. This was just a beginning of Releasing the animals intended for food on someone's table

for this year. After that, as long as the weather is permitted for Releasing Life, there will be the activity for Releasing Life in the temple as necessary during the whole summer and fall. Anyone who would like to join the Releasing Life effort could donate any amount of money to the Releasing Life Fund. The fund will be for Releasing Life only. It will not be spend on any other purpose. Hope in this present world that is beset by calamities, we dedicate the merit from Releasing Life to decrease the natural and man-made disasters. We pray for peace in the world and may all sentient beings be separated from suffering and obtain the happiness.

## The Teaching on Mind Training

Taught by Venerable Lama Migmar  
Recorded by Wendy Wu

About two thousand five hundred years ago, the Buddha was reluctant to start his mission on teaching because he knew that what he had awakened to is something very special. It is a way of extraordinary nature that the ordinary people would have difficulty understanding. So right after enlightenment in Bodhicharya, he remained silent for many days. Many people requested and invited him for teaching, but Buddha said: "You are not ready." Only after many days later, he started to give very basic teachings, suitable to the ordinary beings.

When the Buddha started to teach the Dharma he didn't have many listeners or students. But after he started to teach and propagate it, eventually many people followed him. And now we know that the Buddha Dharma is all over the world. From India it went to China, then it went to many other Asian countries and now it is here.

We are in a very different kind of time, a different kind of situation and a different culture than the Buddha's time. However, there is just as much suffering as in the time of the Buddha. Our lives now become more complex with all these developments. There are more demand and pressure on the human beings now than in the past historically. We have so much pressure, so much stress and one has to do multitasking just to survive. Plus we are restless, nervous and have pain and sickness. And that is our current situation. Actually, our present day situation makes it more urgent to contemplate the Buddha's teaching.



*In The Dharma Class*

In the ancient time, the Buddha's teaching is also explained as a medical methodology. You might have heard the Buddha is called the Medicine Buddha, the King of the Heal. In the Sanskrit he is called Bhaisajya Guru, which means the Guru of the Medicine. Therefore, many of the Eastern medicines, like the Tibetan system of medicines, people believe that they are obtained through the enlightenment state. The Tibetan medical history is very different from the one we have here in the US. The whole system is originated to prove the very sensitive way of the mind. The Buddha is a Medicine Buddha who is like a doctor and all of us who have pain and sickness are like the patients.

In the Samsara, many of us are sick and we all are suffering because we have the condition of sickness and the

quality of defilement. We are addict to the pride and clinging so we have the suffering of addiction. We are intoxicated with ignorance and confusion. We are addicted to the passion and desire. With those things, our lives have lots of pain and sickness because of our lack of patience. When we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, it is a training that the Buddha is like a doctor, the Dharma is like the medicine, and the Sangha are like nurses to help. The corresponding idea is because we are sick we need doctor, we need medicine and we also need nurse to help us. To free from our pain and suffering we need good doctor. The best doctor we can get is the Buddha. The best medicine we can get is the Dharma. By taking these medicines and with support of our Sangha members then we certainly can free ourselves from the suffering. That is the whole methodology of practicing the Buddha Dharma.

The Buddha said: "Although we are sick now, but this sickness is temporary. It is not a sickness which is in your nature." Right now we are sick because of all these defilements. These defilements are temporary, they are like the clouds in the sky they come and go. But the nature of the space of sky is clear. Similar way, our own nature is healthy and good. We have the potential and that's why the Buddha said that: "Everyone of us is a Buddha". We all have Buddha's nature inside us. Therefore, we all can become Buddha.



*The peaceful Zen meditation Center*

# One-Day Pure Land Retreat

Christine Cheng

I have been looking forward to take the one-day Pure Land retreat at Vairocana Monastery for long time. I still remember my first visit here last August to see Venerable Ta Yu. I took refuge in Triple Gem and took the five precepts during that visit. This is my second visit; in the meanwhile, this is the first time I participate in the ceremony held in our temple.

The air in the mountain area is so fresh. I felt a bit tired on the first night because of the flight from Toronto to Pocono. Surprisingly, I woke up automatically without setting the alarm clock for the next early morning. Maybe it was the light from the sunrise, or the song from the birds that passed me the message to get up for the morning service. With the first incense stick burned and the chanting from the bottom of my heart, I started experiencing the first section of the monastery day. Since I seldom practice on this part before, I cannot even catch up with the reciting of the Shurangama mantra. Shi-Fu simply encouraged me to try to work on it at home along with the recording. She also praised my appearance as very respectable with the robe on. Her words helped me to forget all the worries: just correct any improper thing carefully in the future, that is it!

After the breakfast, other lay people arrived. The one-day Pure Land retreat starts at around 10 o'clock. The sunshine penetrated the whole Buddha hall. We all received the eight precepts from the Venerable. We recited Amitabha Buddha sutra mainly, with sitting meditation in

between. Maybe it is to make me feel easier during the ceremony; the venerable did not request a silence precept. This allows me to ask various questions to the venerable and other people. However there is one brother who really kept silent during the whole ceremony. We all felt his goodness. No food was allowed after lunchtime. It is a big challenge for me, since I am really attached to food. Actually there are lots of benefits for this practice. It is an opportunity to experience the suffering that other sentient beings encounter and to cultivate the great compassion in our minds. We will cherish that we have food to eat now compared with the others who are suffering. Since we do not have to cook and do the dish washing, it saves us lot of time to focus on the cultivation in the simple life. When I asked question about the food offering part of the evening service. The venerable explained that we were borrowing the power from Buddha Dharma to transform the small rice and water into delicious food for the hungry ghost realm to reduce their sufferings.

At the time of the sunset, when the last incense was burned, we all cherished the last minute of cultivating life during the day. A day is passing so quickly, how we cannot treasure the impermanence of life! Time just goes by, it never waits for us. The venerable gave a short speech on the procedure in the coming day and lady Shu Kyi volunteered to practice the natural healing of acupuncture for us all.

For our lay people, we are always busy with the daily life. The one-day Pure Land retreat provides opportunity to re-take the precepts. Wish the seed planted would lead to the truly complete cultivation of Buddhism in the future.

## Coming Events

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

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

**9/24/05, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. –  
9/25/05, Sunday, 10:00 a.m.  
One-day Zen Retreat  
Ven. Ta Yu**

**10/8/05, Saturday  
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Thousand-Buddha  
Confession Ceremony  
Future, Star Era  
Ven. Ta Yu**

**10/23/05, Sunday  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Mind Training  
Ven. Lama Migmar**

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

# The Enlightened Garden

Ven. Ta Yu

Translated by Wendy Wu, Edited by Toni



## Driving Means Practice



We drove out for some errands in a summer afternoon. The car was traveling on the shaded mountain road that we didn't feel any sultry in the hot weather. I gently rolled down the car window to allow some cool breeze brushing on my face, which increased the coolness and comfort.

Mean while, I sensed that the vehicle ahead of us was slowing down and there was a traffic jam. I guessed there might be an accident ahead. In the motorcade, we couldn't see what really had happened but could only follow the car ahead of us slowly and to stop from time to time. In a moment, some of the cars already bypassed another vehicle from its left and right sides impatiently. It multiplied the risk to pass by on this curve mountain road. If you did not pay attention, then an accident might be occurred. Some of the drivers saw the neighboring car was bypassing they just followed it and did the same thing. In this way, the traffic would become more chaotic. At the time, the motorcade moved forward slowly. Ha! I saw the cause of the traffic jam finally.

The traffic jam was caused by a big truck fully loaded with sand and gravel. Because it was very steep to drive uphill, the truck was moving very strenuously. It had to take a break occasionally after driving slowly up a section. The vehicles behind the truck could not wait any longer and the drivers kept on blowing the horn at that truck. But it was still moving slowly like a snail. Mean while, the truck driver poked his head out, shouted and scolded at them and didn't care who's false was. Because there was a distance between us, therefore I couldn't hear what he was shouting about. I could only saw his face was filled with anger and his complexion was very ugly. The driver behind the truck was already annoyed with hot temper by this situation so they scolded back at each other without making any mutual concessions. At the mean time, a white sedan escaped from the motorcade and bypassed several cars. While the vehicle just about to bypass the truck, the truck driver said: "Bah!" and spit a full mouth of chewing gum on the roof of that white sedan. The truck driver laughed at it meanly. It seemed that he wanted to warn other drivers behind the truck to see who dared to bypass him! Because the traffic jam was very serious behind the truck so everybody hinted to the truck driver telling him to yield to the right and let fast speed vehicle to bypass first in order to clearing out the traffic. But he didn't even pay any attention to it. Whenever there was a car blew the horn and wanted to bypass him he would do the curve driving intentionally to prevent any car to

bypass him. Nobody could do anything about it so everybody moved slowly with patience like cow walking. After driving to a place that the road turned wider, everybody started to bypass that truck at the same time without any prior agreements. We also cautiously bypassed that truck while we could. That truck driver was blowing the horn fiercely and unhappily while I looked back at him. That irritation noise seemed very uncoordinated in this tranquil mountain and rural.

In a short period of time, we bumped into a big freight vehicle again while driving on the road. My intuition was: "This is not good!" Perhaps, the same thing was going to happen again. What do you know? The driver of this big freight vehicle stretched his hand out and waved to hint everyone to bypass him. Furthermore, he yield to the right initiatively once he saw a car driving behind him to let everyone passing through smoothly. Every one passing by was grateful to him and blowing the horn to thank him. And, he also blew the horn joyfully to say welcome. So the road was unimpeded. When it was our turn to pass him, I joined my palm and said: "Be with the Buddha!" to him. He was stunned at first then a spring like dimple was blooming on his face.

This happened not long ago. Although it had passed several days and it was not worthy to be mentioned. But, I had a very deep impression and sensation on it. Because of individual's different actions towards the similar matter based on the causes and conditions, it reflects a different retribution. Like that big truck driver who didn't have the spirit of giving precedence out of courtesy with a narrow mind, he caused everyone unhappy and created bad connections. This would also reflect others' unfriendly response to him. But the driver of that freight vehicle treated others with courtesy. He was not only benefit everyone but also kept himself happy without anger. Wasn't that incredibly perfect? I remembered my Master's explanation on "Virtue" and it was like this: "To benefit self means 'The Right Path', to benefit others means 'Moral', so to benefit self and others is called 'Virtue'". The way of practicing the 'Virtue' is to help others, to contain others and to give precedence out of courtesy to others through the actions in our daily lives. It is the performance of the moral style. If we live in the ignorantly habitual pattern all the time, make other angry, and destruct others, it still is a non-moral performance even we are talking about the Buddha Dharma but we cannot do it right in our daily lives. We should understand that the practice starts from a small action. It should be bound into our daily lives then one will indeed benefit others and self".

