



# AZBT Newsletter

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### Record for Thousand Buddha Confession Ceremony

By Wendy Wu

On January 28, Vairocana Monastery held a Thousand-Buddha Confession Ceremony on the day of Chinese New Year eve. People were coming from Shrewsbury of Massachusetts and State College, Scranton, Allentown and Pocono of Pennsylvania to attend this extraordinary Thousand-Buddha Confession Ceremony.

Attendees from Massachusetts arrived at Vairocana Monastery at the night of January 27th. Others who live in Pennsylvania arrived at the temple separately before the ceremony. They brought lots of delicious vegetarian dishes, sweet rice cakes and fruits for everybody to be shared during the lunch.



*Attendees of the Ceremony*

The Thousand-Buddha Confession Ceremony started at 9:00 o'clock in the morning. Attendees prostrated to the one thousand Buddhas of the past Magnificent Era within five sessions. In each session, they prostrated to two hundred Buddhas. Everybody followed the

chanting sincerely to prostrate to purify his/her body, speech and mind and to absolve his/her Karmic Obstructions accumulated from many eons. After completing two sessions in the morning, then came the Grand Offering. Six steaming vegetarian dishes were offered to the shrine Buddhas with winding incense around. Accompanying the chanting of Grand Offering, it was pure and magnificent.

Venerable Ta Yu gave a short teaching after the Grand Offering. She encouraged all attendees to be satisfied with what we have and to cherish all of our good fortune. Our expectation should be just right like the "Middle Way" mentioned in Buddhist doctrines. That is, we shouldn't be too happy about anything because it will bring sorrow afterwards. If this matter makes you very happy and very successful, then you will be attached to it and hope that you would be successful like this all your lifetime without any problems. And, you will be stunned once you run into a problem. But, if you were unfortunate all the time then it will make you unwilling to live. Therefore, our way of life should be just right and shouldn't be extreme. We should be able to be receptive to all occurrences so that we won't have any anxiety. Your good connection will end ultimately and same with your bad connection. Therefore, while you struggle the hardest in your life, you shouldn't be worry because the worst circumstance is impermanent and it may be gone tomorrow. Thus, you

can create a four-season garden in your mind. You should be delightful of your garden in the spring, summer, fall and winter. It is important to apply the teaching of Buddhist Sutra in your daily life and in your way of dealing things. Every Sutra is a resource to assist you to become Buddha. As long as we have a grateful mind and know how to cherish things, everyday will be a great day for us. No matter how the external environment has changed, you will always know how to manage to have a good life. The more you let go, the more you gain. If your mind is as wide as the space, then your merit will be as wide as the sky. It all depends on what we are going to do in our way of practice.

During the lunch, various kinds of delicious vegetarian dishes filled the whole table. Everybody utilized this opportunity to greet and to talk to each other while enjoying the delicious food. All attendees continued to prostrate the remaining six hundred Buddha at 2:00 p.m. The ceremony was completed past 5:00 p.m. after reciting the Dedication Gatha to dedicate the merit to all sentient beings. All attendees were full of the joy of the ceremony of Prostrating to the Thousand Buddha of the Past.

## Here and Now

By Yuan Ming

*One of the Buddhist practices is to live in the present moment, here and now. But, it must be complete with the awareness and the realization of causes and effects. Only by doing so, then it will bring positive outcomes and great harmony to all. Osho is a mystic philosopher who is*

*famous on searching harmony and wholeness that lies at the core of all religious and spiritual traditions. The following is a feedback to a friend's email about Osho's answer on "WHAT IS HERENOW?" in one of his books – "Walk Without Feet, Fly Without Wings, and Think Without Mind".*

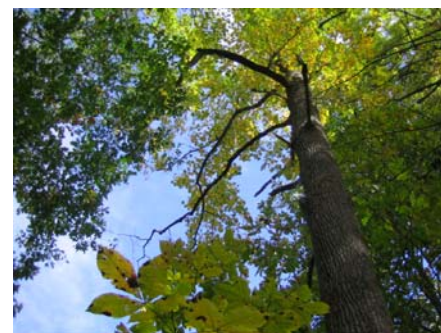
Past, present, and future only exist in this relative world. Though the past is no more and the future is not yet, if we still feel the existence of the present, then we cannot deny the existence of the past and future. Because the present is the current moment, which concurrently becomes past even before we can pin point it. Also, deep in our mind we still recall the past. Future is there too, because if there is no future, then where is the present after the current moment has already turned into past. In this relative world, where we are able to feel, time (past, present and future) flows like a stream. We are unable to cut through it with a knife, yet we are responsible to each moment. It is an infinite chain of causes, conditions, and results. There is no beginning and there is no end.

Just like we feel impermanence, we feel eternity. Just like we feel many, we feel utterly one. Just like "your train starts moving and you feel the other train has started moving which is just on the other track? Or, the other train starts moving and you feel your train has started moving", eternity or utterly one only exists in a relative sense of impermanence or many. Time and directions are meaningful only because things are moving and changing.

The absolute truth is as what you have mentioned in your previous email --- "there is no matter, no feeling, no ideology, no formation,

no consciousness, no concept of time and space, not even the effort to go anywhere or the idea of achieving anything (even the Buddhahood)... It is boundless and beyond our comprehension." It is even beyond eternity and utterly one. Actually, the absolute truth is shown by the relative truth everywhere. There is no absolute truth other than or separating from this relative world. The absolute truth is the nature of the relative truth and the relative truth is the appearance of the absolute truth. They are not separating from each other.

Because the past is no more, the future is not yet and present is only the current moment, which concurrently becomes past even before we can pin point it, there is really nothing we can hold on, even the feeling of eternity or utterly one. That is why the Buddha said in Diamond Sutra: "past, present and future minds are unable to be found."



*The existence based on emptiness*

Because things, tangible and intangible, are arising, residing, changing and ending based on the causes and conditions, there is no real nature that is unchangeable or un-moveable within things or underneath the surface. If things have real nature, they should be there always without any arising, residing, changing and ending. If they are real, they should exist

independently without any causes and conditions. But, we know that nothing can exist independently without causes and conditions in this world. Therefore, things are all relative and their nature is empty. Based on emptiness, anything is possible and everything has its function and value. The arising, residing, changing and ending is not a real arising, a real residing, a real changing and a real ending. At the moment while things are arising and ending, actually they are not arising and not ending because there is no real essence within. Therefore, in Diamond Sutra, Buddha said: “We should visualize all phenomena as dreams, illusions, water bubbles, shadows, dews and lightening.”

Also, in Diamond Sutra, Buddha said: “XXX is not XXX, called XXX.” Because there is no real essence in all phenomena, there are only fake names and that is how this relative world of illusion exists. Behind or underneath each fake name there is no real nature. Fake name is not other than emptiness and emptiness is not other than fake name. Fake name is emptiness and emptiness is fake name. Even though they are empty, they are still functioning based on the relative truth. Therefore, we should be better not ignoring the consequences of the causes and effects.

There is a true story in Zen history about the Zen practice of a wild fox. In Tang Dynasty, a wild fox changed into human form as an old man to attend the teaching giving by Bai-Chang Huai-Hai, a famous Zen master, many times. One day, the fox stayed after the teaching. The master asked him: “Who are you?” He told the master that “he is not human and he was a practitioner here long time ago in his previous life”. At that time, a disciple asked

him: “For great practitioners, do they still fall into the consequences of causes and effects?” He replied: “Great practitioners do not fall into the consequences of causes and effects.” Because of that, he had fallen into a wild fox’s life. He said: “Please help me.” Then, he asked: “For great practitioners, do they still fall into the consequences of causes and effects?” The master replied: “Great practitioners understand and do not deny the consequences of causes and effects.” After hearing the answer, the wild fox realized the truth. He prostrated to the master and said: “Thank you, master, now I am able to liberate from the form of wild fox. I live under a cliff behind the mountain. Please kindly arrange my funeral as a monk.” The Zen master gathered all the monks to have a funeral. At the beginning the monks were confused. The master then led everyone to the rear of the mountain and found a dead fox under a cliff. They cremated him.

Teaching On Thousand Buddha Confession Ceremony

Taught by Venerable Ta Yu  
Recorded by Wendy Wu

When I became a nun, there were over one hundred Dharma Brothers in our temple. The Sangha’s daily schedule was extremely regular. Plus, our Master paid immense attention to our health conditions. Therefore, I learned how to maintain my health after becoming a nun. My Master told us how to look after our health all the time. Then I said: “Aren’t we practice to get rid of self-cling? This physical body is fake, why do we need to pay immense attention to it?” Then my Master replied me with these words: “Take care of yourself for the sake of the Dharma.” Today, I would

like to share these words with you. Whenever you are not feeling well physically or mentally, you should think of these words: “Take care of yourself for the sake of the Dharma.”



*Contributing the body and mind to all living beings*

Ourselves aren’t very important, but there are many people around us are significant. We say that we shouldn’t have any attachment to practice Buddhism. Therefore, don’t bother to take care of our bodies. Buddha taught us that we shouldn’t attach to our bodies because this physical body is fake. But, Buddha also wants us to safeguard our bodies. Why? Because Buddha said: “The graces from all living beings are too great to requite; the graces from our country are too great to requite; and the graces from our parents are too great to requite.” These favors have been given to us from our past lives to our present lives. We are not going to talk about our past lives because they are too far off so we will just talk about our present lives. From the time we were born until now, if there is no grace giving by all living beings and no help from parents, relatives, and everyone, then we will not grow up. It is impossible for us to talk and walk right after our births. If we don’t have teacher’s guidance, then we won’t understand many things and won’t have any knowledge. If there is no parent to take care of us, we

won't be alive after we were born. If the doctor does not treat us, we won't be here now.

Buddha says: we should requite those graces. Therefore, this is the reason why we should take care of ourselves for the sake of the Dharma. The Chinese Confucianism also says that: "Our bodies, hairs, and skins are given by our parents. We dare not to damage them." Buddhism says: "This physical body belongs to the residence of the monastery." Our Master told us that: "Now you became a monk or nun to practice in this monastery. Your body is not yours. Your life is not yours. You have already given them to the Three Jewels." Contribute this body and mind to serve all living beings that is the way to requite the grace of the Buddha. Buddha doesn't want you to only prostrate and pay respect to the Buddha without respecting others. The true requiting the grace of the Buddha is that you live for the sake of all living beings. Because when you aren't feeling well, the people close to you will be worried. For example, your parents and relatives, everyone will be very painful.

I feel that everybody's role is very important. Because our monastery is a mini one and it cannot be here without any one of you. Therefore, everyone should take care of oneself for the sake of the master, for the sake of the monastery, and for the sake of the Dharma. Our physical bodies are fake, but there are so many Dharma activities need to be accomplished by us. Thus, we should take a good care of ourselves. Your body belongs to the Three Jewels, Buddha, Dharma and Sanga. Therefore, if you are sick then it is the same as the master is sick. If you are healthy, it also means I am healthy. When you are successful

that is my joy too. So you see, everybody is so important! Therefore, sometime I thought: "What should I do? I should bring some young people because everybody is so important but everybody is older than me." You should take a good care of your body because the Three Jewels need your support.

"Contribute the body and mind to all living beings that is to requite the grace of the Buddha." This is a stanza in the Surangama Mantra. We should remind ourselves with this stanza constantly. Each one of us has different Karma in our previous lives. Sometimes, no matter how we maintain our health we still get sick because this physical body is impermanent. We should take care of our bodies as possible as we can. But, we shouldn't be afraid of getting sick. Once our bodies ache, we are doom; we cannot practice; and we cannot do anything - because once I do something, I will become this and that. If this is the case, then you are attaching to this physical body too much. This is incorrect either. Buddhism emphasizes the Middle Path that it doesn't deviate to the east or to the west; it doesn't deviate to the left or to the right; and it doesn't deviate to the good or to the bad. We shouldn't abuse your physical body but we also shouldn't over protect our physical bodies. No matter how we protect our physical bodies, the body will be decayed one day. Therefore, do it just right. Everything should be taken care of based on the Middle Path. If you know how to take care of things with the Middle Path, then the relationship between you and your spouse will be terrific; the relationship between you and your children will be terrific too; and the

## Coming Events

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

**4/8/06, Saturday  
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Medicine Buddha Confession  
Ceremony (Chinese)  
Ven. Ta Yu**

**5/6/06, Saturday  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Sakyamuni Buddha's  
Birthday Service (Bilingual)  
Ven. Ta Yu**

**6/10/06, Saturday  
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Thousand-Buddha  
Confession Ceremony  
Present, Moral Era (Chinese)  
Ven. Ta Yu**

**7/1/06, Saturday 10:00 a.m. –  
7/2/06, Sunday 12:00 p.m.  
One-Day Pure land Retreat  
Eight Precepts (Bilingual)  
Ven. Ta Yu**

### **Meditation Class at American Zen Buddhist Temple**

AZBT offers meditation classes in the four quarters through out the year.

- Spring Quarter: Feb. – April
- Summer Quarter: May - July
- Autumn Quarter: Aug. - Oct.
- Winter Quarter: Nov. – Jan.

Classes are held every Sunday morning from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. weather permitting.

For the latest update of AZBT activities, please visit the website at:

<http://www.azbt.us>

relationship between you and your friends, your boss, your company and all other people will be excellent. Because you know how to manage your interpersonal relationship, you will be in complete harmony wherever you go. Because you know how to manage things with the Middle Path, which is not to deviate on either side, everything is just right. Each one of us plays a significant role. Each one of us should practice diligently. One should take care of oneself for the sake of the Dharma.

Zen Sect Part II

Taught by Venerable Ta Yu  
Translated by Wendy Wu

To explain Zen with a very simple sentence, Zen is “Wisdom”. “Wisdom” cannot be described with any language or translation. In Sanskrit, wisdom is “Prajna”. Zen Sect asserts that “Don’t rely on the texts and words”. It is to tell us not to attach to the terminology and ideology. If we are attached to the terminology and ideology of the Sutras, not only we cannot practice well but it also becomes an obstacle for us to realize the truth because language and translations are only indicators to the direction. In our library, there are so many Sutras and stories of the Zen Sect told by the Great Zen Masters. These are the examples and references to us. It is not guaranteed that we can realize the truth and become Buddha after reading these books. But, we shouldn’t stop reading Sutras.

There are four methods to Zen. The first one is “The Contemplating meditation”. This is a method to practice Zen. It introduces the way of meditation. It is a practice of how

to pay attention to your breath and how to count your breath while meditating. Some of the methods teach you how to visualize during the meditation. You can visualize the images of the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas or a lotus, a steady object. It utilizes various pure-images to clam your mind. Because our brains are very active, therefore, our visualization is creative just like playing a movie. But, we as human beings use it in a wrong way. Therefore, we have created many obstacles. Zen Sect precisely uses this as an antidote. You like to think, just let yourself think. Let yourself think of good things and use good things to guide your thoughts. With this method, it is using the visualization to concentrate on the visualized object in your mind. This method of Zen practices is called “The Contemplating Meditation”. All methods are excellent. But, you need to practice diligently on the method that is suitable for you then you will benefit from it. If you have good concentration, then you will be effective in your studies. When you have a focused mind, then you can absorb all the knowledge in the written materials. If you have good concentration, you can use it in your daily life also. It will be a great help.

The second one is “The Wisdom Meditation”. “The Wisdom Meditation” is to practice based on the Dharma Words recorded from the Zen Masters or the Virtuous Laypeople’s conversations after they got enlightenment. This is called “The Wisdom Meditation”.

The third one is “The Tathagata Meditation”. Why it is called “The Tathagata Meditation”? It is because that all living beings have “Buddha-Nature”. Our “Self-Nature” equals to the “Buddha-Nature”. Therefore,

it is “The Zen of Buddha-Nature”. When we realize the truth and see our Buddha-Nature, this is called “The Tathagata Meditation”. Then, who can realize “The Tathagata Meditation”? Only you can. Because only you know that you have realized Buddha-Nature. Other people won’t know what you have attained.



The Bodhidharma

The fourth one is “The Patriarch Meditation”. It is what I said before. The Buddha, Sakyamuni, transmitted the True Dharma to Mahakasyapa while holding a flower with the smile on the Spirit Vulture Peak in India. “Buddha held a flower and smiled” is also one of “The Patriarch Meditation”. It then transmitted to China. There was a very famous Zen Master in Chinese Zen Sect. His name is “Lin Ji Li” — Master Lin Ji. Therefore, there are many inheritances of the Lin Ji Linage in the Zen Sect. Many of disciples are in Lin Ji Lineage including myself. The most famous method in the Lin Ji Lineage is called “To bang and to bawl”. It is to use the incense board to hit the students. Sometimes, the students got enlightened in that one bang. The Zen Master will bang the student no matter it is right or wrong. Therefore, when attending the Seven Days Zen Retreat in the Zen Hall, the Zen Master, who leads the retreat, holds an incense board in his/her hand. It is because we have

many wondering thoughts. Although our bodies are sitting still, during the meditation, we are playing the movies in our minds. The Zen Master, who leads the retreat, knows that you are having wondering thoughts. When the Zen Master hit you, all of your wondering thoughts are gone. Therefore, "The Patriarch Meditation" is to use various methods from every activity of the Zen Master, such as walking, eating, sitting, sleeping, and any movement, to lead the living beings into the practice.

The most famous in "The Patriarch Meditation" is the Koan in Zen Sect. Many westerners are attracted by Zen because it's mystical. For example, there is a Koan about a

bird flying into a bottle. Then, it wants you to find the answer of where is the bird in that bottle? It doesn't let you to use common everyday logic to explain things. It makes you concentrate to explore the answer. Another Koan is about an iron ox. There is a mosquito flying toward an iron ox. The mosquito bits the iron ox. Do you know the answer? This is Zen. If you know the answer, then you are a Zen Master. Zen Sect is very alive, and it uses various interesting methods. Because Koan is beyond common sense, this is the reason why it cannot be described with any language or translations in Zen.

*(To be continued)*



## Notice on Email and Website Address Changes



For better performance and service, the email and website addresses of the American Zen Buddhist Temple have been changed to the following:

Email: [azbt@ptd.net](mailto:azbt@ptd.net)  
Website: <http://www.azbt.us>

Please visit the website for the latest update of AZBT activities and contact us with the new email address.



## The Enlightened Garden



**Venerable Ta Yu**

Translated by Wendy Wu  
Edited by Toni Kenyon



Among the green tea bush, there are shadows moving slowly. Wearing the bamboo hats and carrying the tea baskets around their waist, they are not afraid of the scorching sun. Their hands move up and down skillfully. The tea fragrance, which gladdens people's heart and refreshes people's mind, is overflowing between their fingers. Other than talking and laughing, sometimes, a brisk folk song reverberates among the mountain valleys. Because of their adornment, the green earth becomes livelier.

Every time when I see the back shadow of a tea picker, it always makes me remember those days in the past. In my memory, mother often dressed like

this too in those years. She crossed one and another mountain working early to greet the morning sun and going home late after the sunset. Her diligent sweat soaked her garments. When it was the time for a infrequent break, she always had to take care of me who followed at her side. Thus, the light tea fragrance was the most familiar smell in my childhood. After growing up, it always inspires me at the moment when I smell the fragrance of the tea. The scenes of my childhood felt just like in yesterday.

I remember that my mother was always busy. She seldom spoke and smelled. In this big family, any miscellaneous and trivial things from inside out



were almost always taken care of by her. She woke up in a hurry at the crack of dawn in early mornings to cook breakfast then she went to the pigsty to feed the pigs. Afterwards, she went to riverside to wash the whole family's clothing. When she came home, she swept front and back yards and put everything in order. When it's her turn to have a meal, the cups and dishes were usually strewn all over the dining table. Sometimes, the leftover wasn't enough for her to eat so she gnawed the cooked sweet potato. In addition, my mother also helped my father's work up on the mountain and in the field to keep the livelihood. She was so busy everyday to keeping our house. But, my grand parents didn't favor her at all. They were not only nitpicking and deriding her, but also beating and cursing her in every possible way.

I remember after dividing family property; once the tealeaves in grandma's teagarden were stolen. Grandma accused emphatically that my mother stole her teas. Without any evidences to prove it, they rashly picked up a wooden stick to beat my mother. While in a rage, grandma beat my mother especially hard. I only saw my mother falling on the ground and begging for mercy but the rod in grandma's hands never rested slightly. We kids all knelled down on the ground crying and begging for mercy. Finally, grandma abandoned the stick and kept on insulting and cursing my mother then left furiously. We rushed to mother's side to help her up. We saw her was bleeding heavily and it tightened our heart. We couldn't take it any more and cried out loud. After my mother getting up reluctantly, she pulled us up with her hands. We tottered into the house to escape from a nightmare.

Later, we moved from countryside to the city to settle down. My parents lived frugally and worked diligently so that our lives became more stable day by day. One day, we learned the news that grandfather had passed away. My parents rushed back home to arrange grandfather's funeral. They brought widowed grandma home after grandfather's funeral. At that moment, grandma was old and weak; she lost her teeth and she was bald. Her temper wasn't as short as before anymore. The pitiful thing was that her former wounded foot hadn't got better. The wound

had wicked into a bowl-sized wound that the pus was oozing out of it constantly. The stink of the wound made people keeping away from her. Sometimes the suppuration accumulated inside the footplate and caused the swelling. If you pressed it with your hand, then the blood would give a fluctuating phenomenon. The doctor told us that if the suppuration blood didn't got pinched out, then the whole foot would be putrefied. Thereupon, to squeeze pus out of grandma's wound became my mother's daily routine work. She undertook it without any complaint. Every morning, I saw her soaked tealeaves and salt in the water (people said that it has the functionality of disinfection) and brought it to grandma. She gently squeezed out the suppuration with her hands. The thick yellow liquid oozing out between my mother's fingers but she didn't even wrinkle her eyebrows a bit. After squeezing out the bloody pus patiently, she soaked grandma's foot in the tea water then dried it off with towel. This scene made me quite ashamed because I was still indignant about the injustice that my mother had suffered in the past and I didn't know how to dispel the negative mood towards my grandma. But, my mother could let it go calmly and served grandma with all her heart. Why shouldn't I feel deeply ashamed?

Under mother's careful tending, grandma's condition was stabilized a little. But, it got worse afterwards and couldn't be cured. In a dark and stormy night, grandma gripped my mother's hands without word and with tears in her eyes. Gradually, everything was calming down. The connection between grandma and mother in this lifetime was ended with their gripping hands.

After learning Buddhism, I realized that mother really is a compassionate Bodhisattva! She didn't bear in mind an old grudge and repaid it with lots of forgiveness and loving caring. Although she hadn't studied any Buddhism at that time but she actually understood to render good for evil and to absolve grudges. She substituted hatred with compassion to dissolve their resentment in many eons. This type of loving kindness and filial moral is the best education to me.

