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AZBT Newsletter



By Wendy Wu

Vairocana Monastery held a Bathing Buddha Ceremony on May 6 to celebrate the Buddha Sakyamuni's birthday. Many people came to the temple to attend this ceremony. Some of them were from State College, Bethlehem, Allentown, Philadelphia, Pocono and Stroudsburg in Pennsylvania. Others drove a long way from Shrewsbury and westborough, Massachusetts. Our format of the Bathing Buddha Ceremony was to recite the text in English first then chant in Chinese.



Bathing the Buddha with Joys

People from Massachusetts arrived at Vairocana Monastery the night before. On May 6, people living in Pennsylvania came to the temple one after another before the Bathing Buddha Ceremony started. They brought not only flowers and fruits to offer to the Buddhas but also lots of delicious vegetarian dishes and desserts for everybody to enjoy during lunch after the ceremony.

Jeannie briefly explained the steps of bathing Buddha to everyone

before the ceremony. Venerable Ta Yu gave details on the meaning of bathing Buddha. It is to purify our body, speech and mind in order to absolve our Karmic Obstruction. Afterwards, the Bathing Buddha Ceremony commenced in the magnificent chanting of the Praise of Bathing Buddha. Venerable Ta Yu led everybody to chant the Praise of Buddha followed by the recitation of the Holy Name, Sakyamuni Buddha, while circling around the Buddha. When the wonderful hymn of Bathing Buddha Gatha started, everybody came to the Bathing Buddha table sequentially to bow with joined palms and to bath the statue of the Bathing Buddha that has one hand pointing up to the sky and another pointing down to the ground.

After everyone finished with bathing Buddha, Venerable Ta Yu gave a lecture then it was the Grand Meal Offering. Looking at a full table of gourmet and delicious vegetarian dishes, desserts and fruits, everybody was filled with Joy of Dharma, to truly enjoy the lunch buffet. Xiu Zhu from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania gave a free acupuncture treatment to those who needed after the lunch. Meanwhile, Kim and Grace from Westborough, Massachusetts led the volunteer from State College, Pennsylvania to do some painting. They repainted the four pillars at the front of the Buddha Hall, the door of the Zen Meditation Center and other places that had paint flakes. This made those places renovated beyond recognition. They have truly accumulated innumerable merits!

TEACHING ON BATHING
BUDDHA CEREMONY

Taught by Venerable Ta Yu
Recorded by Wendy Wu

It is very rare that we have two old Bodhisattvas joining us the Bathing Buddha Ceremony. Today we have Professor Chen's mother who is ninety-three years old. Another is Grandma Liao. Their age adding together is several times of mine but their bodies and minds are very healthy. They are our young people's models. Just think about it, my age hasn't reached half of theirs but my eyes hurt and waist aches. Therefore, I am so embarrass. I hope that these two old Bodhisattvas can come to the temple more often if they have time. We, young people, will feel a little healthier after seeing them.

Today is the Bathing Buddha Day and it is Buddha's birthday. The Bathing Buddha Day is April 8th of the Chinese Lunar calendar. It is Vesak Day in Theravada tradition. Buddha was born in Lumbini Garden of Nepal. After the Buddha was born, he walked seven steps right away and a lotus emerged from each step. He used his index finger with one hand pointed up to the sky and the other index finger with another hand pointed down to the ground. Then, he said: "From the heaven above and beneath, I am the sole honored one in the universe." What Buddha spoke caused a lot of arguments when people annotate these words later on. Buddhism encourages people to practice and it asserts "selflessness". How come Buddha's first sentence was to speak: "From the heaven above and beneath, I am the sole honored one in the universe." Actually, the "I"

that Buddha was talking about isn't the "I" that ordinary living beings speak of because Buddha is already "selfless". If Buddha had "ego" then he would be here like us worshipping the Buddha. There are many explanations for "From the heaven above and beneath, I am the sole honored one in the universe." But, the simplest reason of Buddha dwelling in this Saha World is for the sake of living beings. Therefore, Buddha said these words to encourage us to practice.



The honored one in the universe

The principle of our practice is "selflessness". But, if we don't have self, then we cannot practice because this self is "the nature of the self". And, this self also represents living beings' "I" in the Saha World. We assert "The Six Ways of Cyclic Existence". "From the heaven above" means "Heaven". "Hell" represents "beneath", which means "The three lower realms". The meaning of "From the heaven above and beneath, I am the sole honored one in the universe." is no matter you are in the heaven due to your great merit or you are falling into the three lower realms because lacking of merit, from the heaven above and beneath only human realm is in the middle and human beings have the best opportunity to practice. Therefore, the "I" spoken by the Buddha means from the heaven above and beneath, living beings are the most honorable ones

and have the best opportunity to practice. Either we having vexation or having merit, we all have the best opportunity to practice.

Buddha's teaching has been transmitted for over two thousand five hundred years to now. Buddhism has propagated to many countries. But it is not easy for Buddhism to develop in the western world. For example, when you search information over the Internet, you will read carefully word-by-word at the beginning. Later on, if your English is excellent, then you will fast browse it through without seeing the details. This scenario will be a huge drawback in our practice. Because the fast pace in the western world cannot wait for a moment, people in the western world ask for a fast method to practice and want to see the result instantaneously without effort. This is the biggest obstacle when we practice. It is like when we use the computer and the information doesn't come up after we push a button, then we are very angry. We complaint the computer being down because of virus, but we don't even think whether it's been properly used. We don't have good practice but we say that the temple is too far away and it is too close to the local highway, it is too cold or too hot in the temple, and the master doesn't have time to talk to me etc. We don't even think of the key point - the "I" in the "From the heaven above and beneath, I am the sole honored one in the universe." "I" is essential to practice. How should we practice? And, how should we apply it to our daily life?

If someone asked me that: "Shi Fu, how long will it take me to get enlightened?" I will take Dalai

Lama as an example because the ancient patriarchs and great masters had passed away and you don't know them. Dalai Lama has reincarnated for the fourteenth times. He has practiced for fourteen lifetimes. Where were you in your previous life? Therefore, we cannot achieve enlightenment just in one lifetime.

There is a great sentence that I would like to give to everybody: "Practice will never be a waste. It definitely will benefit you and be with you life after life. When you need it, the energy of your practice will come out naturally."



**Taught by Venerable Ta Yu
Recorded by Wendy Wu**

When a person around you has a fit of temper and is in a bad mood, it is because that he/she is relieving stress. Many of the working people have enormous stress. They can't scold their boss or colleagues. They can't express their anger to other people. What they can do is to tolerate it, then express their anger to the family members when they come home. Some people love small animals very much but they might kick a cat as soon as they see one to express their stress when they are in a bad mood. We are learning to be Buddha; we should learn how to "work together to benefit others" and try to understand what's in others' minds. There must be a reason for him/her to do such thing today. Maybe he/she is in a bad mood today or it is because of something else. Therefore, we should treat those anxious living beings with compassion.

It is difficult to tame our mind. But, mind won't hurt people directly.

Therefore, even it is not easy to tame our mind but we can still restrain it. We can control our body too. Although we can't stand a person any more, we can squeeze our hands instead of hitting that person because we still have a way to control our body. But, it is the hardest problem is our speech! It is not easy to control our speech.

I remember that I had a good schoolmate when I was in elementary school. One day, I don't remember why; we just didn't want to talk to each other. Then, she went home to southern Taiwan right after the beginning of our summer vacation. Every time when she thought of me, she became more and more angry. Finally, she wrote a letter to me and sent it through express mail from southern Taiwan to Taipei. I remember that I didn't wake up completely when I received that letter in the early morning but I woke up completely after reading her letter for five minutes. I gave her a call afterwards and told her: "I don't know that you are so good in writing. I felt that you were scolding right in front of me while reading your letter." Because she didn't want to talk to me, she expressed her dissatisfaction in writing.



The pure and magnificent AZBT

I frequently say: "Don't write any letter and don't make any phone call while you are angry because you will do something wrong easily under that situation." While you are emotional, you express your emotion via language and in writing

then you feel very comfortable after that. You think that's the way it should be and you get justified. It seems that you are completely right. But, in fact, you are just talking for yourself and you don't even know you are hurting someone. Therefore, you should be very careful in expressing your feeling with the pen. Because this pen is just like a sword, it will hurt people. Our speech is extremely impure and it is not easy for us to keep quiet. That is why no matter what level our practice is at, we will accumulate great merit when we practice in a temple because we can control ourselves better within these several hours while practicing inside the temple. It doesn't matter if you enter the Samadhi during the meditation or you are just sitting there for several hours. At least, you can't hurt anybody with your speech within that period of time. Therefore, you still gain merit.

There were two wild geese and a turtle. They lived close to a pond. One year, it didn't rain for a long time. It was so dry that the pond was almost dried up. If the pond dried up completely, the turtle would die. Those two wild geese and the turtle were good friends so the geese said: "Hey, turtle! The pond is almost dried up; therefore, we are going to fly to a place that has water. Since we are worry about you, we are going to bring you along." The turtle said: "I also want to escape! But I don't have wings like you do and I can't fly! What should I do?" The wild geese said: "It is very simple, we will hold each end of a stick with our mouth and you will bite into this stick with you mouth in the middle. We will take you to a place where has water like this. But you have to remember that no matter what happens on the way, you can't talk at all." Then the turtle said: "It's easy! There is nothing easier than

not to talk!" Thus, those two wild geese held the stick with their mouth and carried that turtle flying in the sky. When they were flying over a small town, the villagers saw them flying in the sky and said: "How come that turtle can fly? This turtle must be different from other turtles." The other villager said: "No, it is just an ordinary turtle. This turtle must be very lazy. It doesn't even want to crawl but asking these two wild geese to carry him around." The villagers started criticizing these three animals flying in the sky. After hearing what they said, the turtle wanted to debate. As soon as the turtle opened his mouth, he fell down to the ground and was killed. This story gives us a big warning. There is nothing to do with the people on the ground when you are flying in the sky. Those people want to talk about you, so what? You don't want others to talk about you and you refute what they said yet the result is you are hurting yourself. Learning Buddha Dharma is to learn how to control our conducts. We will come across lots of this kind of tests while we are learning to conduct ourselves.



To visualize constantly

I often think that living beings' organs grow very interestingly. Our visual nerve is behind in our brain. We see from behind in our brain first then to our eyes. According to the medical science, our real eyes grow behind in our brain. Therefore, our eyes should look inwards. Because our eyes look behind from

our brain, they should see what we think first that is seeing ourselves. But, we are not like that. Our eyes deceive us and we are looking outwards. Why you deal with this matter this way not that way? Why I take care of this matter this way but you don't follow me? This is because that our eyes are looking outwards for right and wrong. Buddhism asserts that: "Don't pay attention to whether others will or won't do it; just focus on whether you will do it or not." It doesn't matter of others' right or wrong.

You should be aware of yourself. Therefore, "Constant awareness keeps us away from ignorance; the world will naturally be peaceful." It is not easy to be aware of our ignorance. We are aware of a part of our perception. A blurry corner in our perception is the most vulnerable place to create numerous bad karmas and there are many such corners in our perception. There is a corner that is totally insensible in our consciousness too. Do we know what we are talking about? What are we looking at? And what are we listening to? Therefore, our perception often deceive us.

We are unhappy and not satisfied because we often live in a comparing mood. We ask others why? But, when we reach certain age after absorbing lots of knowledge and understanding worldly causes and effects, we should ask ourselves why? We can find the answer by ourselves. Learning the Buddha Dharma is to find the answer by oneself. You go to the temple to ask the master about something you don't understand but what the master tells you are just some hints. It all depends on how much you can contemplate and integrate into your daily life. This is called "practice". Otherwise, you have attended lots of teachings but it

just enriches your knowledge and your practice may not advance.

I hope that everyone, who attends this confession ceremony today, will learn from Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara to use the thousand eyes to observe the sufferings of the living beings and to use the thousand arms to support and help living beings. But, Avalokiteshvara doesn't have one thousand mouths. Maybe in the future, there will be a Bodhisattva who has one thousand mouths. His mouths are not for criticizing others but he vows to expound infinitely supreme Dharma to benefit living beings and to bestow extremely wonderful sound with his one thousand mouths to please all living beings. If we haven't reach this stage, then we should just vow to be a Bodhisattva with one thousand arms and one thousand eyes and don't vow to be a Bodhisattva with one thousand mouths yet because it is not easy to discipline and to cultivate our speech.

ZEN SECT PART III

**Taught by Venerable Ta Yu
Translated by Wendy Wu**

These various types of Zen teach us how to practice. Many people said: "Why cannot I progress in practicing Zen?" Our "Nature" is pure and bright; it is like sunlight. But, hidden behind dark clouds, which is our ignorance. The sun is above the dark clouds. Therefore, we cannot see the sun, but is still there. Unless you disperse those dark clouds, you will not see the sunlight. These are the Karmic Obstructions in our minds. When we practice diligently, it is like wind

slowly blowing off the dark clouds. After that, the sunlight will appear.

Actually, practicing Zen is not just sitting meditation. We can practice Zen any time. Because many people admire Zen and fell that Zen is very powerful and mystical, Zen Sect is very popular in the west. Sometimes, I saw some news on the newspapers regarding criminals, who had committed serious crime by killing people. The newspapers said that this criminal is very intelligent; police almost couldn't solve the case. They said this is a wisdom-type murderer. Actually, the newspapers were wrong because if a person has wisdom, he will not commit any crime at all. Wisdom is a virtue produced in people's mind. It is a strength coming from the practice and realization in our minds from inward to outward. If these murderers had virtue, then they would not commit the crime. Therefore, you can say they are smart but you cannot say they have wisdom. Wisdom is the strength of the mind but smart is only a perception of keen ears and sharp eyes.



No attachment

The reason why I said: "It is very difficult to explain Zen" at the beginning, it is because that Zen is "Wisdom" and having wisdom is Zen. If you pay a Zen practitioner to commit a crime, he will never do it. Therefore, social convention misleads people sometimes. The sentient beings in this world have

three most powerful senses, which are our eyes, ears and minds. We should start our practice from our Six Sense-Organs. The practice of our eyes is very simple. That is our eyes should not be controlled by the outer phenomenon. Don't look outward to cling to the phenomenon. We should look inward for the pureness and peacefulness in our minds. The method is just like driving a car through a tunnel. It is dark inside the tunnel and you just keep driving. You will feel the darkness when you close your eyes. Just The practice of the ears is the same way. For example, now you hear a sound of clapping hands. You keep on listen to hear the true sound of this sound. The sound fades away immediately but this sound made a deep impression in your mind. Therefore, you feel that you can still hear this sound in your mind. You listen inward and keep on listening inward to hear the true sound of the sound. Finally, you will find that there is nothing. Even though you listen, you don't hear the sound? This is one type of practice on ears. Many people said that: "Don't think about anything while meditating." This is wrong. You should know everything while meditating but you are not affected by anything. Meditation equals to open up your mind. You can see and hear things clearer than others. A true Zen practitioner is a safe driver because you know the movements of all vehicles from all directions. You know how to turn and how to stop. If you don't know anything, then it means you are falling into sleep. Practicing Zen, you feel that you don't have anything, but at the same time, you feel that you have everything. It is because that everything in the universe is in your mind and everything is under your observation.

(to be continued)

Coming Events

**May to November
Every Sunday
10:00 a.m.**

**Group Meditation
Sharing the Dharma**

*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

*8/5/06, Saturday
9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.*
**Earth-womb and
Great Mong Sam ceremony
(Chinese)**
Ven. Ta Yu

*9/9/06, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. –
9/10/06, Sunday, 10:00 a.m.*
One-day Zen Retreat
Ven. Ta Yu

*10/14/06, Saturday
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.*
**Thousand-Buddha
Confession Ceremony
Future, Star Era
(Chinese)**
Ven. Ta Yu

Meditation Class at AZBT

AZBT offers meditation classes every year from May to November.

Classes are held every Sunday morning from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. One on one private classes are also available.

For the latest update of AZBT activities, please visit the website at:
<http://www.azbt.us>

The Enlightened Garden

Venerable Ta Yu

Translated by Wendy Wu

Edited by Toni Kenyon



Sometimes in our lives there are perplexing matters, which we don't know whether to cry or to laugh at. If we haggle and take everything seriously, then we would not only wear ourselves out but also waste our bright and transient lives.

Mr. C is a financial consultant of the bank where our temple opened an account. Few months ago, our temple's account got transferred from the Ohio office to Mr. C. It takes less than three minutes' driving from our temple to his office. I could jog to there on a sudden impulse. That is the reason why he was chosen to take care of our temple's account.

For 6 months we did not receive any monthly statements of our temple's account after the transfer. I found a time to call him yesterday. After few transfers, I finally got the chance to talk to this senior financial consultant.

I asked him, "How come we haven't received any monthly statement for such a long time?"

"We had tried to send it to your temple on January 2006, but the mail had been returned to us because of the incorrect mailing address." This was his reply.

Then, he asked me to double check "the correct" mailing address with him. The result is that our mailing address is correct all along. He said: "The address seems correct, but the post office refused to deliver it to your temple."

At the end, I asked him to send the monthly statement to us again as soon as possible. He guaranteed that I would receive it on the same day. If the post office still refused to deliver it, he urged me to come to his office and give him "the correct" mailing address.

I couldn't help smiling after hanging up the phone. He might be pleased with himself for dealing with another client cleverly that I didn't reveal his lie during our conversation. I could tell him easily that he just wanted to cover up his carelessness by playing with me. Our temple had this account in that bank around three to four years. We had always received the monthly statement on time. If the mail was returned to the bank as what he said, he should have tried every possible means and had sufficient time to deal with this problem in half a year. If I didn't contact him by now, then it would be like a stone dropped into the sea – no answer. I didn't tell him that he shouldn't push the responsibility to the post office and it was unbelievable either.

Over the last six years, Cresco's post office has taken care of our temple wonderfully. Some people had written our temple's address wrongly, but as long as "AZBT" several letters are correct, Ms. Donna - the mail carrier - always delivers it to our temple on time. Not to mention that the bank mail had the correct temple's name and address, it shouldn't be rejected by the post office for any reason. Mr. C, as the senior financial consultant at the bank, may be dealing with many clients daily. Perhaps for him, our temple is a very small client and it is not on his ' must – do' list. However, if this is his way of handling things, then he will realize one day that his transient life can only be described with ONE word - "regret".

Mr. C is only a little glitch that we may come across in our lives. If we strived for a reason on everything, then our lives would be a succession of chaotic and inexplicable tortures. There was a legend about leaving a loophole in the Chinese ethical culture. In the ancient times, there were people who had to hunt to make a living. The helpless lives didn't wipe out their good instinct. Whenever the hunters used their net to hunt, they wouldn't forget to leave a loophole to give birds and beasts a chance to escape. The time has changed and such kindhearted human nature had gradually given way unconsciously in the heartless doctrine of the academic honor!

It isn't ethical to reveal a person's lie right in front of him and to step heavily on his sore spot. Sometimes, this will make the situation worse. Because everybody has ego, when the ego is smashed, then one may turn anger into bad thoughts easily. Revealing a person's lie won't change him a bit but to make a bad connection. It will harm others and won't benefit self. Therefore, it is better to save his face and give him a space to think in order to inspire virtual seeds in his mind.

This kind of behavior to leave a loophole is just like the Buddhist practice of compassion. The complex affairs in our life are tests to our charitable instinct. If you were too pushy on everything, then you would have lost the instinct of humanity even you were right. Sometimes you think that you have won in an argument, but contrarily you have lost a lot unwittingly. The struggles within our minds gave us no time to taste the beauty of our lives and lost many opportunities to comprehend the splendor events in our life. When we look back, we are old already. Who is the winner? Who is the loser? Perhaps, either of us didn't win at all. Because either of us didn't know that take it easy is the most enjoyable thing in our ordinary lives.

