

Awakening Humanity, Awakening the Heart

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Sunday, 20 March 2011 16:14



Watching the news and listening to the words of scientists, our attention is called to the environmental problems of today and the planetary emergency that we are facing. Listening to the teachings of religious or spiritual teachers around the world, we are guided to see how times are changing and moral values are being eroded. These may perhaps seem like separate issues, but what [Dharma Master Cheng Yen](#) tries to tell us is that these are inter-related—the minds of people today create the world that we live in.

Our material desires, our lifestyle preferences, our habits, and our values all determine the course of our actions, and collectively the actions of the human population have brought considerable damage to the planet. This has disrupted Nature's order and balance, putting all of the planet's inhabitants in peril. Grounded in Buddhist wisdom and knowledge of human nature, the Master tells us that the only way we can possibly "save the world" is to transform the hearts and minds of humanity. There is a great need for wisdom, and wisdom comes from purity of heart. "All of us must take in the Dharma (the Buddha's teachings) deeply. The Dharma is like water that can cleanse our hearts of impurities."

At this time, the Master is earnestly calling upon her followers to observe a [vegetarian fast](#), as a prayer and as practical action to make a difference. "Ever since the old times in China, when people are in distress and pray, they will undertake a vegetarian fast to express their earnest sincerity and piety. They abstain from meat to refrain from taking life. This practice is for the purity of body and mind. As an act of compassion, it also helps nurture the love and humanity deep in our hearts."

"At the same time, abstaining from meat is spiritual training that helps discipline our body and mind. While observing the vegetarian fast, we will be more aware of our conduct as well as the thoughts that enter our mind, and be more mindful of acting correctly. Practicing this, we give rise to more good thoughts and fewer bad thoughts, and gradually this will become natural for us."

"When more people have hearts of goodness and think good thoughts, speak wholesome words, and do good, it will have a profound impact on our society. It will create a cycle of goodness. Our world now really needs such a cycle of goodness, so I hope all people can truly observe a vegetarian fast and together pray for our world with a most sincere and earnest heart."



This prayer is not about appealing to a certain divine being to seek protection or intervention from a higher source, but to turn inward to our own heart and mind and give rise to the purest heart, full of piety and humility. "When we pray for the world, what I most sincerely hope for is that every one of us can bring forth our most pure heart, thereby uncovering our most pure and

Awakening Humanity, Awakening the Heart

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Sunday, 20 March 2011 16:14

enlightened self: our inner Buddha, the Buddha within. Since we create our world and conditions through our actions which originate from our thoughts and mentality, when we can bring forth our inner Buddha, we can bring about the most profound kind of change to our world."

In the time of prayer, we can touch our Buddha nature. But at most other times, we are so deeply entrenched in our habits that our Buddha nature stays buried. "When we really come down to it, spiritual cultivation is all about changing our habits," the Master says. These habits are not only physical habits but also habits of mind such as fixed ways of thinking. That is why she stresses that we must have faith in the Buddha's wisdom and, with openness and sincerity, try to learn from his wisdom and truly practice his teachings in action, using the water of Dharma to cleanse our heart and mind.

"When the Buddha looks at us living beings, he feels a great sense of compassion and pity, for he sees that we in our ignorance have brought so much suffering upon ourselves. Because of greed, we do many foolish things. When greed takes hold of our hearts, it will easily give rise to anger as well as misguided or wrong thinking. When there is greed, anger, and ignorance in our hearts, it leads us to take actions that are unwise and foolish. Because unwise actions bring negative consequences, we will become afflicted and we will give rise to even more greed, anger, and ignorance and even more wrong actions. It is a vicious cycle, created by ourselves. In this process, we lose more and more of our innate wisdom. As a result, we move further and further from morality. Therefore, our spiritual impurities, such as greed, are our greatest hindrances. This is why purifying our hearts, developing wisdom, and truly awakening are so important."

"At this time, we must take action. It is not enough merely to discuss the issue of how to save the planet. Only with action can we really help." So, the Master asks us to observe a vegetarian fast, to deeply reflect on the Buddha's wisdom in order to cleanse our hearts and minds, and change our habits, starting with our daily life. "The Buddhist teachings are very profound, but they ultimately deal with the down-to-earth issues of daily living. They are not some abstruse, lofty theories removed from the cares and concerns of everyday life. They are about our situation, here and now. And our time is one of crisis. We must truly wake up."

Written by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team
Based on Dharma Master Cheng Yen's conversations in Chinese

Read part 1 - [A Time of Crisis, A Time for Great Awakening](#)