

Venerable Master Hsing Yun's 2015 Letter to Dharma Protectors and Friends

Dear Dharma protectors and friends,

Auspicious greetings!

As one Spring comes to an end, another begins. Through the window is a view of Spring's warm sun and crimson flowers. In the year of the goat, I wish you prosperity all year long, and also "Auspicious Beginnings of Peace and Harmony."

During the beginning of the Spring Festival last year, in order to fundraise for the universities, I delivered Dharma Lectures on "The True Meaning of Dharma" at Taipei Vihara, Hui Chung Temple, Buddha Memorial Center, and Nan Tai Temple. It was also out of the hope of making an offering of my lifetime's understanding of Buddha's wondrous Dharma to the audience. In the earlier days, monastics had to go around and beg people to come and listen to Dharma lectures; sixty years later, without having to broadcast through speakers or radios, a large number of people are willing to make contributions in order to hear the Dharma and support the universities. It can be said that Buddhists have also elevated themselves in terms of vows and spiritual aspirations.

In the past, government reimbursements have been the main source of funding when it comes to establishing a university in Taiwan. Now that we are taking on this mission as a private organization, we are blessed by the conditions given by the Dharma as well as the religious devotions shown by Buddhists. By contributing one hundred Taiwan dollars per month per person, pooling the power of millions of people, heaped-up earth will become a mountain. Today, Fo Guang and Nanhua in Taiwan, University of the West in the United States, Nan Tien Institute in Australia, and Guang Ming College in Philippines have all made progress. For this reason, on the last day of the Million-Member Fundraising Campaign Prayer Service of Gratitude held inside Fo Guang University's Huai'en Gymnasium, I rushed back from Beijing in order to express my gratitude to the committee members. I truly believe that the campaign will become a very special part in the history of world universities.

Speaking of Beijing, I was once again invited to the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse last February for a meeting with Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China. Upon our meeting, the President said to me, "I have finished reading all the books (*Buddhist Affinities Across 100 Years*) you have given to me." I then said in reply, "Your idea of the Chinese Dream has made China even more magnificent and powerful, which is truly admirable."

As we look back in history, Buddhists have never taken an opposite stance against politics, for it can assist the country in maintaining social order, improve social norms, and purify human minds.

For this reason, at the Cross-Strait Symposium hosted by Yu Zhengsheng, Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), I gave a talk on "The Chinese Dream and Humanistic Buddhism," during which I mentioned the following four points: 1) Promotion of the Chinese culture requires the enhancement of soft-power; 2) Cross-Strait peace must be built over the foundation of the Five Harmonies; 3) Spiritual abundance comes from practicing the Three Acts of Goodness and Four Givings; and 4) Humanistic Buddhism can contribute to the betterment of society and nation.

Starting from last April, my One-Stroke Calligraphy Exhibition toured Xiamen Museum, China Museum for Fujian-Taiwan Kinship, Zhenjiang Museum, China Art Museum Shanghai, Dalian Modern Museum, Shandong Museum, Zhejiang Art Museum, and Guangxi Museum of Nationalities. Furthermore, One-Stroke Calligraphy galleries were also set up by the local governments of Bingzhou City of Shandong, and Juehua Island in Liaoning. I have also been told that my piece on "Never Forgetting the Initial Mind" was sold for five million Chinese dollars at an auction in Shanghai. To be honest, calligraphy is not the biggest part in it all; what is most important is the promotion of culture and the enhancement of bonds between people, as well as exchanges across the Strait. With much gratitude to those who see value in the works of an old and crippled man, I shall continue to cherish my times and keep writing to repay the kindness of all those who have contributed to the Public Education Trust Fund.

Alongside the exhibitions, I have also received honorary doctorates from Tongji University, Hunan University, and Shanghai Normal University in Shanghai, as well as Zhejiang University. In addition, President Kim Jung-Gi of Uiduk University from Korea also paid a personal visit to Fo Guang Shan to confer an Honorary Doctorate in Philosophy to me. In order to live up to all these honors, I shall aspire to show even greater passion in the works of culture and education. During my visits to the above universities, I also gave over ten lectures on topics such as "Seeing the Power of Your Dreams." Some had asked what my dream is, to be honest, as an old monk, the only thing that concerns me now is Cross-Strait peace. For this very reason, I would like to stress the following, "Unity of the Chinese people, let there be Buddha in every family, social harmony, and happiness for the people." It is hoped that these dreams will one day come true.

Ever since the establishment of Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism, professors Cheng Gongrang from Nanjing University, Hsieh Ta-Ning from Fo Guang University, Chen Chien-Huang from National Pingtung University, and Du Bau-Ruei from National Taiwan University have actively participated in related research works. In addition, under the hard work of Venerables Tzu Hui, Miao Fan, and Miao Guang, the Institute has made the following events possible: the

Academic Conference on the Theory and Practice of Humanistic Buddhism as Advocated by Venerable Master Hsing Yun, the International Academic Conference on Religious Practices and Literature at Dajue Temple in Yixing China, the Symposium on Humanistic Buddhism, and also the International Academic Conference on the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sūtra and East Asian Cultural Studies. At these conferences, world renowned scholars from both sides of the Strait, and also Germany, America, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Israel, Vietnam, and Hong Kong have shared their achievements in the studies of Humanistic Buddhism in the 20th century.

One thing worth mentioning is that at the Doctoral Forum for the Studies of Humanistic Buddhism, I was able to stress the importance of bringing happiness, stability, carefreeness, liberation, and solace to the world as part of the Humanistic Buddhist practice to seventy doctors from over twenty universities across the Strait. After the Forum, more than thirty of them actually requested to take refuge in the Triple Gem, to which I happily obliged out of the joy in seeing them finding spiritual solace.

In terms of cultural endeavors, we have presented various publications of Fo Guang Shan to all of our devotees during the annual Sangha Day Celebration, including the *Fo Guang Dictionary of Buddhism - Revised Edition*, published under the guidance of Venerable Tzu Hui, and the supervision and training of staffs and volunteers by Venerable Yung Ben. The revised and expanded edition of the dictionary, which includes over 30,000 entries, nearly 3,000 pictures, and a total of over ten million words, has become even more user-friendly to the general public.

For half a century, I have been contemplating the book, *365 Days for Travelers: Wisdom from Chinese Literary and Buddhist Classics*. Now this book has finally been published, with Tsai Meng-hua as Editor-in-Chief and suggestions and comments provided by my disciples Hui Kuan, Hui Chuan, Chueh Pei, and Ru Chang. The idea of this project began about fifty years ago, when I was traveling around the world and always found copies of the Bible in the hotel rooms. This inspired me to compile a book of Chinese literature and culture, which also integrates the teachings of Buddhism and the wisdom of ancient sages.

For this reason, I organized six book launches around Taiwan. In addition to the active responses, as well as the participation of the Tourism Bureau of Taiwan and the hotel industry in Taiwan, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun Public Education Trust Fund, which was established in Mainland China, also signed an agreement with the People's Publishing House in Beijing to gift complementary copies of *365 Days for Travelers* to all major hotels, so that copies of the book can be found in every hotel room. My disciples Yung Guang, Yung Fu, Man Yi, Chueh Yuan, Chueh Chu, Chueh Yu, Miao Shi, Miao Le, Miao Lian, and Huang Mei-hua have spared no effort in

promoting this book. I hope that with everyone's support, we will be able to establish a Dharma Propagation Association in the future to widely endorse and promote *365 Days for Travelers*. In the forthcoming period, the book will also be published in English, Japanese, Korean, German, and many other languages, an undertaking which everyone is welcome to participate in.

This year marks the third anniversary of the Buddha Memorial Center, and under the leadership of its Director, Venerable Ru Chang, it has been a fruitful year. In addition to the Henan Province Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition, Ink Agreement and Design Exhibition, Thousand-Hand Bodhisattva by the Taiyuan Dancing Group of Shanxi, and the Auspicious Radiance of the Seven Jewels Exhibition, there has also been a series of cultural events, which combined vegetarianism and environmental living. We have also organized the 2014 Kaohsiung International Book Fair and Vegetarian Expo, which was widely acclaimed. Moreover, the Buddha Memorial Center has been recognized as a member of ICOM (International Council of Museums), becoming the museum to acquire membership in the shortest time since opening, which is worth celebrating. In addition, the Buddha Memorial Center is also ISO50001 certified for its energy management system. It goes to show that with the efforts of all Fo Guang members around the world, both Fo Guang Shan and the Buddha Memorial Center are being recognized internationally.

Last year, at the 3rd Hsing Yun World Humanities Forum on "Establishing the Future of Humanity," Chairman of the Alliance Cultural Foundation Stanley C. Yen, Creative Officer of dX Creative House Eric Yao, and Founder of the Commonwealth Business Group Charles H.C. Kao were invited to speak on their ideas of education, creativity, and concepts that will impact the future. During the forum, I also gave a talk on the "Ten Contentions" to encourage everyone to compete with oneself.

Speaking of contention, in July 2014, the Buddha's Light Sports Association hosted the 2014 BLIA Cup International University Women's Basketball Tournament at Kaohsiung Arena. Under the urging of the President of Fo Guang Shan Sports Association, Lai Wei-Cheng, and Chief Executive Officer, Venerable Hui Zhi, the tournament once again set off an upsurge. Participants of the tournament included both men's and women's teams from fourteen universities from Taiwan, China, Japan, Korea, Philippines, and Malaysia. The tournament turned out to be a national sports event as audiences of all ages stopped by throughout the tournament to enjoy the exciting games. Many thanks also go to Chen Chu, Mayor of Kaohsiung for her continuous support for the tournament every year.

The becoming, existence, destruction and cessation of this world, and the disasters and catastrophes that occur in life have been unceasing. Last year, the world saw numerous tragedies

such as the Malaysia Airlines incidents, the South Korea ferry disaster, and the Yunnan earthquake. In Taiwan, there has also been a series of calamities including an aviation disaster, a series of gas explosions, and a cooking oil scandal that jeopardized public health and safety. In August, under the instructions of President of the R.O.C., the National Religious Commemoration and Prayer Ceremony for the Kaohsiung 731 Gas Explosion and Penghu 723 Aviation Disaster was organized by BLIA Chunghwa and co-organized by the Executive Yuan. Over fifty religious representatives from Buddhist, Catholic, Muslim, Christian, and I-Kuan Tao associations and local charity organizations were invited alongside the twenty thousand people in attendance at the Kaohsiung Arena. Led by President Ma Ying-jeou, Vice President Wu Den-yih, representatives from government sectors such as the Executive Yuan, Legislative Yuan, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Transportation and Communication, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Mayor Chen Chu of Kaohsiung, and Mayor Wang Chien-fa of Penghu, the assembly prayed for the victims and survivors of the tragedies.

Although the lifespan of the physical body is limited, the Dharma body is eternal and will never die. Last year, in terms of handing down the light of Dharma to inexhaustible lamps, sixty youths renounced household life, following my footsteps to become tonsured and entered the Dharma Gate. Additionally, Chief of the Department of Religion of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces - Venerable Jung Woo, Abbess of Vihara Dharma Shanti, Medan - Venerable Zong Ru, and Venerable Dao Jian of Huayan Temple in Chongqing, China were amongst over seventy people to become the 49th generation of the Linji School as well as the 2nd generation of Fo Guang Shan's Dharma lineage. I am happy to see the growth of these Bodhi sprouts and encourage everyone to never forget one's initial vows, to nourish one's wisdom life through cultivation and the Dharma, and to propagate Humanistic Buddhism as one's duty.

In glorious October, during the 2014 BLIA World Headquarters General Conference, I retired from the position of President and appointed the position to Most Venerable Hsin Bao, and the position of Vice-President to Venerable Tzu Jung, Liu Changle, and Yu Sheng-Ching. I deeply believe in the continuous handing down of the baton from generation to generation, like an old tree trunk that flourishes by growing new branches. As such, when the State Administration for Religious Affairs of Mainland China invited me to speak to Buddhist youths from both sides of the Strait on "Passing the Lineage," I gladly did so. With Venerable Chueh Pei's hard work, the first fellowship conference was successfully held, where I encouraged everyone to communicate and to unite in solidarity so that there is common understanding and progress, as well as harmony, cooperation, and goodwill. In this way, Buddhism will have an even more hopeful future.

I have always said that a monastery should serve as a lecture hall, a school, a gas station, a shopping mall, and a landmark for life. In this way, the lighthouse of Humanistic Buddhism will shine upon every corner. Last year, Venerable Man Run saw to Fo Guang Shan Housuiji Temple's Foundation Laying Ceremony in Japan. Venerable Cheh Cheng began construction of the Fo Guang Cultural and Education Center in Johor Bahru, Malaysia. Under the direction of Venerable Man Ko, construction of the Nan Tien Institute in Australia is close to completion. And under the leadership of Venerable Man Chien, IBPS Paris will be ready for inauguration soon. In addition, Lan Yuan in Yilan, Fu Guo Temple in Tainan, Chao Zhou Vihara, the Guang Zhong Culture and Education Center in Beijing, and also the Hsing Yun Culture and Education Center in Shanghai are all about to be completed.

In my youth, I have lived in Nanjing City for twelve years. Although I had really wanted to contribute to the New Buddhism of that time, it was a pity that causes and conditions were not present. In order to repay the kindness of being brought up there, Fo Guang Shan is now in charge of rebuilding Tianlong Temple in Nanjing, whose foundation laying ceremony was held last September. Also, the Fo Guang Shan Ancestral Temple - Dajue Temple is in the third stage of construction with the White Pagoda, the Cloister, and Dajue Stone Garden all scheduled for completion this year. Construction of the Sutra Repository Building is about to commence and the inauguration ceremony for the Main Shrine will be held soon. It is hoped that all those who visit the Ancestral Temple will be entitled to an even more complete set of facilities to use. These are all exciting events to look forward to.

Looking back on my poverty-stricken days in Dajue Temple, a lifetime's journey feels like ever-flowing water and cloud. I have experienced the Sino-Japanese War, the danger of roaming bandits, the Chinese Civil War, and been on the verge of death many times. In recent years, I had suffered two strokes and now am handicapped, had a heart operation, which causes heartburns if I continue talking for a long period of time, fifty years of diabetes which has made my vision hazy and made me barely able to see what is in front of me, and my hearing has also slowly degenerated. However, I have never found it to be suffering or difficult. I have never found life and death frightening either. I only feel that that's just the way life is and that I ought to progress and exert myself even more.

Therefore, as the saying goes, "For each day that I remain a monk, I will continue my duty in tolling the bell." For the sake of Buddhism and Cross-Strait peace, I shall continue to utilize this old and deteriorating body to propagate the Dharma and contribute to humanity. At the Symposium on Humanistic Buddhism that took place two weeks ago, I mentioned the core ideas of Humanistic

Buddhism: 1) Honor your family and nation; 2) Lead an appropriate lifestyle; 3) Establish right conditions for life and for people; and 4) Maintain a harmonious and joyful mind. It is hoped that all Buddha's Light members will abide by this spirit and continue to shine in the propagation works of Humanistic Buddhism. May the Buddha bless you all with peace and auspiciousness.

Hsing Yun

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Founding Master's Office

English Translation by Ven. Miao Guang, Ven. You Zai, and Ven. Zhi Yue