

Dear Dharma Protectors and Friends,

Auspicious blessings to you all!

Time has passed quickly; as another year draws to a close, I would like to send my prayers to all our benefactors for a peaceful new spring.

As the river of time flows, this world continues to be filled with both joy and sorrow. Just like the previous years, I have not stopped traveling in 2009, in order to follow Buddha's example in covering the world with his footsteps and teachings. The only difference is that having dedicated most of my time to Buddhism, not much had been spared to care for my physical health. Despite the continued degradation of my vision, my mind tells me that I cannot disappoint the devotees for their dedication and support. Therefore my footsteps have only sped up for Dharma propagation. Somehow, this has enabled me to find a brighter and clearer mind, which can be considered a type of unexpected benefit.

An overview of 2009 reveals both exciting developments in history, as well as heart-breaking tragedies. On August 8<sup>th</sup>, Typhoon Morakot struck Taiwan and caused the most devastating damages in fifty years. In only three days' time, dozens of towns and villages in Southern Taiwan were washed out by the flood that dislocated thousands of families and took countless lives. "Heaven and earth are so ruthless that human lives are regarded as livestock." How can the world bear to see this?

Being abroad when I received the news, I knew that disaster relief cannot wait, and called Fo Guang Shan immediately to establish the Fo Guang Shan Emergency Relief Center. I also instructed Fo Guang Shan branch temples worldwide to set up prayer plaques, and donated an emergency relief fund of ten million dollars (NT) to the Ministry of the Interior. Subsequently, China Religious Culture Communication Association, and the Buddhist Association of China also donated five million dollars (RMB) and entrusted me to redirect this money to the Ministry of the Interior.

Although I was not physically in Taiwan, I was very concerned about those affected, and wrote "A Prayer for the Victims of Typhoon Morakot" in order to send my prayers to them. At the request of the Kaohsiung County government, Fo Guang Shan Fuhui Home for Spiritual Cultivation and Cishan Center were transformed into shelters to provide comfort and warmth to the dislocated victims. Furthermore, Pu-Men Senior High School made available one of their buildings to ensure that students from the destroyed Namasia Village could start the new semester. Nanhua University recruited student volunteers to help clean up and restore damaged school campuses. Devotees of Fo Guang Shan came together to do all they could to help; whether it was to pack meal boxes, help transport supplies, donate blood, provide medical care, or counseling, each of them devoted their efforts selflessly and helped the victims as if they were family during a time of difficulty.

I always tell others that just as long as there is a favorable outcome, we do not always have to be the success factor. It was most comforting to see our devotees and Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA) members fulfilling such spirit when they participated in the relief work. On August 30<sup>th</sup>, Kaohsiung County government organized a joint-religious prayer ceremony for the Morakot Typhoon disaster, several religious leaders, government officials

and BLIA members were amongst the crowd of ten thousand who gathered at Fengshan Weiwu Military Camp. Prayers were given under different religious ceremonies and condolences were sent to the victims. This ceremony brought the world's attention to the sympathetic compassion of religions, as well as inter-religious harmony.

In the spring, the month of March was graced by the Second World Buddhist Forum, a much applauded world class religious event. Jointly organized by the Buddhist Association of China, China Religious Culture Communication Association, Buddha's Light International Association, and Hong Kong Buddhist Association, the forum opened in Wuxi, Jiangsu and closed in Taipei. This five-day forum was attended by more than one thousand Buddhist leaders from over 60 countries, representing the Chinese, Southern, and Tibetan traditions. With the theme, "A Harmonious World; A Synergy of Conditions," the sixteen subforums took place at Lingshan, Wuxi, as well as Buddhist temples across Taiwan.

As one of the organizers, BLIA was responsible for most of the organization and planning for the Taiwan portion of the forum. The more than 700 guests who arrived in Taiwan were highly impressed by the experienced event-planning abilities displayed by the association, and marveled at the sophisticated soft power demonstrated by Taiwan's Buddhist organizations. When I welcomed our guests at the airport in Taiwan for the second half of the forum, I saw the joy on their faces as I shook hands with them. I knew that under the principles of respect and equality, the success of this forum not only sets an unprecedented example of direct flights across the Taiwan Strait, but also a milestone for cross-strait and world peace.

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, the National Buddha's Day and Mother's Day Celebration was co-organized, for the very first time, on the Ketagalan Boulevard in front of the Presidential Office, by the Environmental Protection Administration, BLIA and Fo Guang Shan. It has been a decade since the then Taiwan president Lee Teng-hui declared Buddha's Day as a national holiday in 1999, and half a century since I first started petitioning for this day to be recognized as a national holiday. With much feelings, I gave this celebration a theme, "A Thousand Monastics and Ten Thousand Devotees Celebrate Buddha's Day; One Mind, Ten Vows Express Our Gratitude for all Mothers."

Despite the scorching sun, a crowd of more than one hundred thousand poured into Ketagalan Boulevard to bathe the Buddha and say their prayers. The event was also graced by the presence of President Ma Ying-jeou, Nationalist Party Chairperson Wu Po-hsiung, Taipei Mayor Hao Long-bin, the United Nations NGO Peace Making Division Director Miss Gina Otto, the world's ambassadors and representatives in Taiwan, and leaders from different religious organizations. Together, we shared the blessings of the Buddha; even the Vatican sent a letter of congratulations to rejoice in the celebration. The peaceful atmosphere presented by Buddhists, turned the boulevard from its usual location for violent protests and rallies into a place of peace and joy, which has never happened before. In the Southern Hemisphere, New Zealand Prime Minister Hon. John Key also participated in the Buddha's Day celebration organized by our branch in Auckland, attracting the attention of the media and making yet another memorable event for Buddhism. It is hoped that Buddha's Day can be

celebrated annually on Ketagalan Boulevard, so that thousands of Buddhists can share their joy and pray for peace in the country.

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, one hundred monastics and lay devotees of Korea's Tongdosa Temple escorted the Buddha's gold embroidered kasaya to Fo Guang Shan. The monastics and devotees of Fo Guang Shan lined the entire path that leads to the Main Shrine to welcome this precious gift. Twenty-seven years after Fo Guang Shan and Tongdosa Temple became brother temples; the bond was once again strengthened by this event. The kasaya will be enshrined within the Buddha Memorial Hall in order for Buddhists around the world to pay their respects and behold this treasure in person.

That same day also witnessed the foundation laying ceremony for Tai Hua Temple – the first Tang dynasty style Buddhist temple ever to be built in Thailand. The ceremony was presided over by the Thai Sangharaja Ven. Somdej Phra Buddha Jan and Buddha's Light International Association, Chunghwa president Venerable Hsin Ting. The temple will consist of a Buddhist college, translation center, and Main Shrine that imitate Tang dynasty architecture. There will also be a tall bodhisattva bell tower and arhat drum tower that symbolize harmony between the Northern and Southern schools, where the Buddhist melodies will be sounded from these towers constantly.

At this point, there is an extremely rare matter worth mentioning: The main complex of the Buddha Memorial Hall consists of a square base that symbolizes the Four Noble Truths and is flanked by Eight Pagodas which are named: One Religion, Two Communities, Three Goodnesses, Four Givings, Five Continents, Six Paramitas, Seven Admonitions, and Eight Paths, respectively. These represent the Eightfold Path, the basic guidelines to our spiritual cultivation as humans. Inside the main complex, there will be four underground palaces that hold Buddhist artifacts collected from around the world and those donated by Fo Guang Shan's devotees, a conference hall that seats more than ten thousand, and a one-hundred-meter tall bronze sitting Buddha statue that symbolizes the grandeur and loftiness of the Buddha. All the design concepts are based on the hope of reliving the days when the Buddha expounded the Dharma, so that every visitor can be inspired to follow the path of the Dharma.

In order to allow devoted Buddhists to feel the presence of the Buddha, the preparatory committee of the Buddha Memorial Hall introduced the "One Million Heart Sutras in the Buddha" sutra transcription event that will involve Buddhists from the entire world. The goal is to collect one million transcriptions, which will then be enshrined within the Buddha statue for the next thousand years to come. To date, several hundred thousand Buddhists have already participated in the event.

Since announcing the scaling down of my public appearances, I have still been active in contributing to the development of Buddhism and the propagation of Buddhist affairs. At the same time, I have continued to contemplate an approach to Dharma propagation that is suitable to the needs of modern times. After observing contemporary trends and modes of thinking, I instructed Fo Guang Shan's departments to organize programs such as life aesthetics and administrative secretaries. Lasting four months per session, professionals are recruited to help train single young adults with new skills. Following the success of these two

pilot programs, additional programs for Buddhist text editors, hospitality, and media communication were subsequently started in order to help train young adults to become professionals, provide youth with diverse learning grounds, and offer an opportunity to utilize their skills for Buddhism.

Following the success of the Yangzhou Forum in China, Lydia Zhao dedicated her efforts to starting the Chung Mei Culture Forum at the Chung Mei Buddhist Temple in Houston. Speakers such as Pai Hsien-yung (Writer), Yu Dan (Beijing Normal University Professor), Edward T.H. Yeh (Professor and Chairman, Department of Cardiology, University of Texas), Venerable Hsin Ting, and Venerable Yi Kung were invited to give talks on culture, art, Buddhism and medicine to local Americans and Chinese; each panel received wide acclaim. Also worthy of mention is that Chung Mei Temple has a newly appointed abbot, Venerable Long Xiang, who is also the current Venerable abbot of Qixia Temple in Nanjing, China. His inaugural ceremony took place in November. I am never one who is afraid to give. In my mind, not only does this appointment signify the recruitment of excellence, it is a chance for Buddhism in China to come out, as well as an extension of the connection that I share with China. In support of this idea, James Y.H. Zhao offered to donate ten million (US) dollars to continue the construction of Chung Mei Buddhist Temple.

During early autumn, I transmitted my Dharma lineage to the abbot of Northern Putuo Mountain, also Vice-President of Liaoning Province Buddhist Association - Venerable Dao Ji, and also Vice-President of Hebei Province Buddhist Association - Venerable Zhen Guang. These two Venerables became the forty-ninth generation of the Linji Dharma lineage after Venerable Long Xiang. I was also invited to give Dharma talks at Jilin University, Banruo Temple in Changchun, Baosheng Temple and Jingjue Temple in Harbin, and Jile Temple – a Tiantai temple founded by Master Tanxu. In addition, I was also invited to the Inaugural Ceremony of Puti Temple on Lingzhu Mountain in Qinghai, where I witnessed the inaugural ceremony for their new abbot - Master Ming Zhe.

Afterwards, I went directly to Kuala Lumpur to preside over a Triple Gem Refuge and Five Precepts Ceremony as well as a reading event involving one thousand people. Next, I continued to Singapore for the BLIA World Headquarters Board of Directors Meeting, which took place in Singapore and Malaysia between 17<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of November. The meeting took place aboard the Star Virgo Cruise, where I was able to inspire over four thousand members to take on the mission of guiding youths into Buddhism, protect and support the Dharma, purify the world, and broadly deliver sentient beings through the following four points: 1) family harmony and observance, 2) inter-personal harmony and respect, 3) social harmony, and 4) world peace. It is hoped that BLIA members will propagate Humanistic Buddhism that was taught by the Buddha himself, that is needed by human beings, that is pure, and that is virtuous and beautiful, joy, peaceful, and can add to the happiness of humanity, so that the whole world can share such a wonderful religion.

From the months of early through late autumn, I tirelessly traveled to Dongbei and Shandong in Mainland China, and Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, where I saw radiant and enchanting mountains and waters, beautiful sceneries, and the richness of humanity.

Nevertheless, the most beautiful aspect was witnessing the deep earnestness with which the local people sought the Dharma. Time and again, I continue to be deeply touched by this memory. This reminds me of my experiences from the beginning of last year: when I visited Baima (White Horse) Temple in Luoyang, Henan, where I wrote “The Top Temple of Hua Xia”; the realization of my wish of many years to visit Shaolin Temple when I ascended Mt. Song and spoke to the Shaolin monks; and when I spoke about the truth of “harmony” to the monastics and devotees at the Buddhist College of Ancient Jiming Temple in Nanjing, and the Buddhist Academy of China in Fayuan Temple, Beijing.

In addition to propagating the Dharma, instructing disciples, and meetings with guests, I also spent three months’ time to record 104 episodes of *One Hundred Lessons on Monastery Languages and Affairs* in order for today’s monastics to understand the principles and positions that they should hold in order to keep up with the times. Answering questions raised by Venerable Tzu Hui, I shared what I had seen, heard and learned during my learning and study period in the monasteries, as well as my prospective on the future development of Buddhist monasteries. Through these episodes, I hope to transmit to Fo Guang Shan’s monastics, devotees, and everyone from all ten directions a teaching reference for: managing a temple, maintaining the Sangha community, Dharma propagation, liberating sentient beings, and the means of getting to know Buddhism.

During the entire month of August, I used my free moments to dip the calligraphy brush into ink and wrote over 8,000 pieces of calligraphy. I personally believe that my calligraphy is incomparable to those of the famous calligraphers. However, in order to please those who I have heard that earnestly seek my calligraphy as well as the Dharma, I have continued to write despite my shallow calligraphy skills. My forty years of diabetes has led to calcification within my eyes. Barely able to see clearly, I could only rely on my senses to write characters in one breath; completing them in one stroke from beginning to end without discontinuation. Once there is a discontinuation, as I cannot see clearly, I would be unable to judge the continuing stroke of the character, and the work would thus be difficult to complete. Thus, I named my writing One-Stroke Calligraphy. I am grateful to those who think highly of these 8,000 pieces of calligraphy, and who have organized the One-Stroke Calligraphy Exhibition. Having started on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in Malaysia, followed by Singapore, Taipei, Fo Guang Shan, Tainan, Taichung, and Kaohsiung, the proceeds from the sale of the exhibits on tour will go to the Public Trust Fund established under my name.

Established in 2008 and managed by the bank, this Public Trust Fund, has organized various types of public welfare activities to benefit society, such as the Power Teacher’s Award, the Hsing Yun’s Award for Contribution to True, Beautiful and Good News, as well as supporting Nanjing University’s addition of the Institute of Chinese Cultural Studies, and others. The first award ceremony for Contribution to True, Beautiful and Good News was held in November, and awards were given to Cheng She-wo, Hsu Chia-shih, Huang Nian, and Nan Fang-shuo. These four media veterans have contributed greatly to the work of news reporting. This is just the beginning; I am confident that in the future it will be able to inspire the media

have a voice that is more truthful, sincere, and beautiful.

In addition, I also filmed *The Story of Fo Guang Shan* last year. There are also new publications such as the twelve-volume *Ten Thousand Affairs in the World*, which initially appeared as a column on *Merit Times Newspaper*, the fifty-five volume *Lotus Canon, Discipline, Concentration, Sagesse dans le Bouddhisme Humaniste* in French, *Humble Table, Wise Fare* in Nepalese, and the digital version of *Hundred Sayings*. Furthermore, Italian artist, Giuliano Ferri drew illustrations for my stories on the *Heart Sutra* and published *Illustrated Heart Sutra*, which will enable Dharma to take root in the minds of children. Under a burst of inspiration, I also wrote “The Song of Cloud Lake” to express my feelings about the scenery of Cloud Lake beside the ancestral temple, Da Jue Temple. Parts of the lyrics are as follows:

*Amidst the green hills and clear waters,  
The misty rain and clouds,  
There exists Yixing's Cloud Lake.  
Towards the east is the far-stretching foreign trader's market of Shanghai;  
Towards the west is the Jinling city that once enjoyed six dynasties of prosperity.  
In the South there is Hangzhou,  
In the North there is Yangzhou,  
Must be comparable to Yixing's clay arts,  
Must be victorious against Yixing's bamboo forests...*

I am grateful to Mr. Liu Jia-chang, who composed the music; the melody is absolutely beautiful, and thoroughly captures the meaning behind the lyrics. When singing it, it is as if the beauty of Cloud Lake is within reach.

Since Da Jue Cultural Enterprise's official establishment in Shanghai of 2007, there is much joy in seeing that Mainland China is eager to learn of Humanistic Buddhism. Under the cooperation of local publishing companies, titles such as *Fo Guang Textbooks, Humble Table, Wise Fare, Between Ignorance and Enlightenment, A Discussion on Reading*, and so forth have been published. These books have all made the top sellers charts on online shopping sites such as Dang Dang, BookUU, *Yazhou Zhoukan's* hottest cultural topics, and *Beijing News*. Fo Guang Shan's various publications have also made impressive sales at international book fairs at Book Expo America in the U.S., Canada's Street Festival, Frankfurt Book Fair, and Taiwan Meeting Expo in Shanghai.

The Pu-Men Senior High School gymnastics team has always done well. Last year, they represented Kaohsiung County in the National High School Games, and won the Junior High Female and High School Female Team Integral Champion, making it their fourth consecutive victory. The girl's basketball team won the 2008 National High School Basketball League Championship. As of May, Fo Guang Shan's application to establish Three Acts of Goodness Physical Education Association was passed by the Ministry of the Interior. The association's

objective is to encourage and promote exercise within the nation, purify society, and, attract youth to learn about Buddhism through various sports activities,.

I have become more proactive in promoting the Three Acts of Goodness in schools to encourage students to do good deeds, say good words, and think good thoughts. In the future, Buddha's Light International Association plans to annually choose one hundred Buddha's Light Three Acts of Goodness Families. Each family will be awarded a prize of ten thousand dollars (NT) as a form of encouragement and recognition. Through this, we wish to slowly build up the Three Acts of Goodness in schools, families, and society.

Former Hong Kong University Pro-Vice-Chancellor Lee Chak-fun has assumed the post of president at the University of the West and Tian Cheng-mei is the new principal of Jiun Tou Elementary and Junior High School. Jiun Yi Elementary and Junior High School of Taitung was inaugurated in August, and all seats were filled for its first recruiting season. I believe that under Thomas H.T. Tzeng's leadership, the school will be able to become a Three Acts of Goodness School, fostering the three acts of goodness in the students. Fo Guang University signed an Academic Exchange Agreement and Double Degree Program with Gyeongsang National University of South Korea, as well as an Academic Exchange Agreement with University of the West. Nanhua University and Pingdingshan University in Henan signed an agreement to exchange professors and students. Nanhua University's Nanhua Road, which connects it to the Dalin Township of Chiayi, has been in use since July. It is the first road named after a university in the nation.

In the month of June, which is a time for the blossoming of flame tree flowers, the first graduates of the English Master's program in Buddhist Studies, who hail from a total of eight countries including South Africa, Argentina, Canada, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and others, received their degree from the College of Buddhist Studies at Fo Guang University. Additionally, the alumni from the twenty-two terms of graduates of the Srimala Institute, which was established in 1994, returned to Fo Guang Shan for a reunion. During the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion, we held a discussion on "choices" of the future.

The Taipei Buddha's Light Choir participated in the World Choir Championships - Open Choir Competition held in Korea. Competing against hundreds of choir groups, we returned home with a silver medal in the Buddhist music category. The *Compassionate Samadhi Repentance*, which is published by Voices of the Ganges, received the Best Religious Music Record Award in the 20<sup>th</sup> Golden Melody Awards - Traditional and Artistic Music Category. *Ten Thousand Affairs in the World* was awarded the top special honor in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Taiwan Golden Print Awards - Book Printing Category. Additionally, I also received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from National Sun-yat Sen University and became a graduate of the university. Sixty years ago, I came to Taiwan and went to Yilan to propagate the Dharma; half a century later, the Yilan County Magistrate and Mayor conferred to me

Honorary County Citizen, Honorary Citizen, and Key of the City.

Over the last sixty years, the journey of propagating the Dharma started from Yilan and has spread to the five continents. The branch temples of Fo Guang Shan around the world are like the continuously turning Dharma wheel, propagating the Dharma day and night.

With a history of fifteen years, the Vancouver I.B.P.S. finally transmitted the five precepts and bodhisattva precepts for the very first time. Hsi Lai Temple organized the first Council on the Translation of Buddhist Sutra, and organized a Water and Land Dharma Service while holding the Triple Platform Ordination Ceremony. I.B.P.S. Hong Kong organized a Great Compassion Repentance Ceremony, which was attended by 3,000 people. Da Jue Temple in Yixing, China organized the first Fo Guang Family Day, creating an unusually festive family atmosphere at the temple. Nan Hua Temple in South Africa successfully passed its application to the South African Revenue Services for charity taxes, and “Fo Guang Shan Nan Hua Temple” will now replace “International Buddhist Association of South Africa (IBASA)” as its formal title. Chung Tian Temple and Buddha’s Light International Association Queensland Chapter received the Logan City Council - Ethnic Organization of the Year 2009 and The Albert and Logan - Education Award from the Logan City Government.

In the month of April, Nan Ping Temple was inaugurated, and Austria’s Vienna Fo Guang Shan held a Foundation Laying Ceremony. In October, Fo Guang Yuan Box Hill Buddhist Centre in Melbourne held a Foundation Laying Ceremony while the Chicago Buddhist Culture Center and I.B.P.S. Spain were also inaugurated.

The final days of winter always mean the coming of a new spring. Once winter passes, the warm spring will bring blossoming flowers. The *Merit Times Newspaper* is about to reach its tenth anniversary. In the new year, I will also continue to share my One-Stroke Calligraphy with those whom I share affinities with. The “One Million Heart Sutras in the Buddha” Campaign is still actively on the move. All in all, the continuous turning of the Dharma wheel is the ongoing daily mission of the Buddha’s disciple. As 2010 is the year of the tiger, I wrote the characters “Awe-inspiring Virtue and Ocean of Prosperity” for the benefactors, with wishes that the world will be filled with an auspicious peace with the likes of bathing in an ocean of prosperity and compassionate light. May all sentient beings coexist in harmony and mutually benefit each other for future generations. Best wishes to all!

With joined-palms,

***Hsing Yun***

January 1, 2010