

News from The Dharma Realm

COMMENTS BY VENERABLE ABBOT HUA DURING THE OPENING VEGETARIAN LUNCHEON

-continued from issue 152

Outside, nobody will tell you the truth, but here, every word we say is the truth, with no frills or pretensions. At no time should you harm others to benefit yourselves or be greedy for cheap bargains. People who come here to pay homage learn the art of 'taking a loss.'

You don't want to try to get off cheap. The Five Great Principles of the City are: no greed, no contention, no seeking, no selfishness, and no seeking for self-benefit.

Why is it that people have to follow the rules? It is because if you can't even observe the rules, what use is there in your bowing to the Buddhas? How can you count yourself .. a Buddhist disciple? How can you expect to see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas? The Sagely City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is not a tourist spot, not an amusement park, not a coffee shop. You shouldn't come here expecting fun and games, or a perfunctory tour around the place. We don't solicit to tourists; we only welcome those who come to worship and who join in the ceremonies with sincerity. Why? Because this is the home of the Triple Jewel. Whether you know it or not, at all times you are face to face with all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Patriarchs when you are here and so you should bring forth the utmost veneration and reverent demeanor when you are here. If you don't pay attention to these rules, then even if Shakyamuni Buddha himself appeared before you, still he wouldn't be able to help you leave suffering and attain bliss.

Now I will give you some practical advice: In this world, the most important thing to do is to become a good person. If you are a good person, then in the future you will become a Buddha. The Buddha was a person, he perfected his humanity and realized Buddhahood. If you aren't even a decent person, how can you ever hope to become a Buddha?

How does one be a good person? First, be filial to your parents and honor your elders and teachers. Be loyal to your country. You should foster these qualities of filiality, loyalty, humaneness, righteousness, propriety, integrity, a sense of shame, and faith in yourself and in the young. Now someone says, "Dharma Master, you are Chinese; are you loyal to China?" To tell you the truth, I have long renounced all notions of nationality or race. I am an international citizen, or you could say an international "refugee," because there isn't any place I can call home. I don't even want a "self," how much the less a country! All I want to do is give myself completely away in service to mankind and all religions so we can have world peace.

Many years ago in my hometown in Manchuria, I called myself a 'living dead person.' In 1962 when I first came to America and went into a period of seclusion, I called myself "monk in the grave." Now this monk has climbed out from his grave to do a little bit of work for Buddhism. Nowadays my name is "little ant," and "little mosquito." Many

people know these names; they certainly aren't what you would call esteemed titles. I am learning to "bring forth the mind that dwells nowhere"

as it says in the Vajra Sutra. I don't work for my own profit, but only for the well-being of all.

Those of you who wish to become Buddhas should quickly perfect your humanity. The Buddha perfected his humanity and became a Buddha. What is a Buddha? Buddha is just wisdom. What is a demon? Demon is just stupidity. Buddhas benefit others. Demons harm others. The difference lies right here. If you can only manage to remember these few points, then that's enough for today. Finally, I want to apologize to all of you for today we had no delicious vegetarian food to offer you, and no plush decor. Not only that, you got upbraided for not following the rules. It's as if you've just been subjected to a lot of abuse. Very well, so you have suffered some abuse, but if you can remember the Dharma that you heard today and apply it to your lives, then you won't have suffered the abuse in vain!