



歡迎回家，一切都好！

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Welcome home, everything is alright!

Introducing Upasika Lim Poh Eng

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家母有糖尿病，臨終前多年臥病在床，不過她老人家一直都在我身邊。母親病情惡化，我們都知道她只是在拖時間。悲哀的是當時我們都沒聽過《地藏經》，直到今天我還是覺得如果當時知道《地藏經》，就能讓她少受一點痛苦。

在我們不知該怎麼辦的時候，幸好有一位近親勸我們爲了母親最好立刻吃素；最難得的是這位親戚在母親走之前，還幫我請到一本英文版的《地藏經》。當我告訴家人第二天開始我們飲食要改爲素食的消息時，這對於那些肯塔基炸雞和義大利餅的忠實顧客而言，簡直就是晴天霹靂！

謝天謝地！他們孝心發現，並且很配合也很支持新飲食；經過兩個月的堅持再加上七個七，他們現在討厭魚肉和蛋類了！在七七中到廟裡，這對他們也有幫助，所以現在我們全家都吃長齋了。

母親過世後，加上三個小孩各自在忙，我的生活是既寂寞又安靜。直到有一天我的妯娌爲母親在廟裡立了牌位後，邀我們去看看時，我的生活從此改變了。當時別說是佛教徒，倒不如說我們是無神論者，走進道場時，一種溫暖的感覺環繞著我們，好像在說：「歡迎回家，一切都好！」

第一次參加法會，信眾穿著縵衣和海青，莊嚴之相令我肅然起敬。《地藏經》的誦讀對我這個在修道院長大的人可是一個挑戰。第一我不懂意思，其次我跟不上，

My late mother was a diabetic, and her final years saw her bedridden. Nevertheless, she was my constant companion. Just before my mother passed away, she was very ill and we all knew she was just marking time. At this point, the saddest part of all was that we were totally ignorant about the existence of the *Earth Store Sutra*. To this day, I feel that the family could have helped to lessen my mother's suffering had we known of this sutra earlier. However, on the plus side, a close relative did advise us to become vegetarians immediately for my mother's sake. And the relative somehow managed to secure an English version of the *Earth Store Sutra* just before my mother passed away.

When I broke the news that we were to become vegetarians overnight, it was like a thunderbolt to my family. We had been staunch KFC [Kentucky Fried Chicken] and Pizza Hut supporters! Thank goodness, their filial piety surfaced and they doggedly stuck to their new diet. For nearly two months they held on, and at the end of the compulsory forty-nine days they found that they were now averse to having fish, meat, and eggs! It helped that they did come to the Way-place on and off during the forty-nine days. Therefore, we are now full-time vegetarians.

With her demise and with my three children either settled down or on the threshold of their careers, life promised to be lonely and quiet. However, our lives changed when my sister-in-law set up a plaque for my mother at the Way-place and invited us along. We were not even Buddhist then but more like atheists! When we walked in, a warm feeling which seemed to say, "Welcome home, everything is alright" enveloped us. On the morning of my first Buddhist assembly the participants who looked so adorned in their precept sashes and black robes awed me. The recitation of the *Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva* was a challenge to this convent-raised being. Firstly, I did not understand the sutra. Secondly, I could not follow the recitation, and my tongue kept tripping over itself, trying to pronounce unfamiliar terms in Pinyin. Thirdly, trying to kneel through

照著拼音念那些陌生的字詞，舌頭直打結，第三跪著念一早上，輕描淡寫地形容—就好像是初次去登山那般。儘管如此，一星期又一星期我都被拉到廟裡來。而每次去，我忍不住就會跑到流通處，請上人註解的英文書，熱切之情猶如松鼠收存冬糧一般。雖然我不完全明白其中的道理，這也不會減低我的興趣。

三個月後我皈依三寶，次年受五戒。皈依後，我就報名參加居士訓練班，這是我修行的里程碑。訓練班是以華語授課，只懂簡單華語的我，好生氣想找藉口打退堂。可是有個力量把我拉回來，我到上人龕前頂禮，很誠心地求助。不久，我發現自己聽講時，多半聽得懂；這些道理也都有助於改善我對人生的看法。

訓練班結束，我繼續參加法會和加入清掃組義工，在休息時老同修教我佛門禮儀。第二年年頭，開始熟悉於我的工作時，一位佛友建議我接五觀堂的食物檯行堂工作，我這才有機會接觸到廟務的多元性。工作很簡單只要排設法師和信眾的桌子，再把食盤送到佛學班和自助食檯就可以了。可是有時信眾超出預計，爲了趕緊做出足夠的份量供眾用齋，有些義工會在廚房起煩惱而雞飛狗跳，這時就是「忍耐，忍耐，婆婆訶」到底了。

這三年在廟裡就是無常二字可以形容：第二年尾法師問我願不願意做週日佛學課一年級的助教，我答應了。因此在2003年可以看到我在一年級和31個七歲兒童一起，聰明有活力的他們，很快地捉到我的小辮子—不會說華語，所以他們就熱心地教起我來—我被學生教了！這其中有很多滑稽或者挫折的時刻，我無法用言語表達心裡的感覺。不過我的華語小老師真棒，這一年我們在教學相長中渡過了！我也已經登上那條曲折的漫長路通往我夢想的國度。

a morning's recitation was an uphill task for a first timer, to put it mildly! However, something kept drawing me back weekend after weekend. Every time I was at the Way-place, I would make a beeline for the book distribution center and pick out English commentaries by our Venerable Master. I collected his books with the same fervor as a squirrel collects nuts for its winter store. Though I did not really comprehend all of it, that did not dampen my enthusiasm.

Three months later, I took refuge with the Triple Jewel and took the Five Precepts the following year. Almost immediately after taking refuge, I signed up for the Laity Training Program. This was the milestone in my cultivation. Because the program was conducted in Mandarin, of which I understood very little, I was rather upset and ready to find an excuse to opt-out. But something held me back, and instead, I went before Venerable Master Hua's altar and bowed to him and asked very, very sincerely for help. As the days passed, I found that I could actually glean some of the principles of the talks, if not their entirety. That helped to reshape my outlook on life.

After the program concluded, I continued attending assemblies and joined the mop-and-broom brigade. During our sojourn here the senior disciples taught me Buddha Hall etiquette. Just as I was beginning to settle down to the routine, another disciple suggested that I take over the setting up of the lunch counters in the Five Contemplations Hall at the beginning of my second year. Working there offered me another view of the Way-place's complexities. It was a fairly simple and straightforward job—set up the Dharma Masters' places and buffet table, and send over food trays to the Sunday Dharma classes and the General Assembly buffet counters. Nevertheless, there were cliffhanger moments when the turnout surpassed the kitchen's estimate for the day. Then harried volunteer staff would literally fly around in the kitchen whipping up extra food for the serving. At times like this, it was "Patience, Patience, Swo Pe He" all the way.

'Impermanence' seems to be the key word during my three years here. Towards the end of my second year, a Dharma Master asked me if I would like to join the Sunday Dharma Classes as a Year 1 assistant teacher. I accepted. 2003 saw me in Year 1 with a thirty-one bright-eyed, energetic seven-year-olds. They caught on very quickly to the fact that I could not speak Mandarin—so they took it upon themselves to correct me—and by my pupils I am taught! There have been many hilarious moments and equally frustrating times when I could not express myself as articulately as I would have liked to. However, I must say that my Mandarin-speaking partner has been fantastic and somehow we have managed to survive the year! Thus, I have embarked on the long, long trail a-winding to the land of my dreams.