

喜相逢

A Joyful Occasion

美國中西部明州佛教會 親光 文 BY DANIEL SU
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三年前的秋天，美國中西部明州佛教會恭請萬佛聖城恆實法師首次蒞臨明州佛教會及明大佛學社，為本地信眾講法及開示。在實法師指引下，前往聖克勞鎮上的聖約翰天主教大學拜訪他的好友威廉神父。並於去年再會晤時，商定今年秋末，舉辦一場結合佛教與天主教的公開講法。這在明州來說是非常難得、重要的機緣，極殊勝的勝會，是久遠以來未曾有過的大事；因為在美國中北部的明州，是非常保守的地方。大多數的西方人都不太了解佛教和修行，更何況又是面對天主教的信眾。所宣揚的重點，除了介紹佛法的真義外，還要令大家明白其對生活上之受益及應用，乃至最終達到解脫生死輪迴之苦。

這次恆實法師開示的主題是「往生西方極樂世界」，他以極為生動愉快的方式，介紹目前中國、日本、臺灣最普遍，最方便，人人可修行的念「阿彌陀佛」淨土法門，給西方人開啓一個新的修行方法。恆實法師以古今的往生實例，令西方人更能了解佛教除了參禪打坐外，還有寶貴的念佛法門，是求生西方極樂世界之法。經過這次與天主教的互動，我們是很肯定，正法已漸在西方人的社會萌芽成長。好的開始是成功的一半，希望在不久的將來，美國中西部的眾生能夠歡喜信受正信佛法，獲益無窮。

Three years ago in the fall, the Midwest Buddhist Association (MBA) respectfully asked Dharma Master Heng Sure of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas came to speak to the local residents at MBA and at the Minnesota Buddhist Association. Under DM Sure's guidance, we also went to visit Father William at Saint John's University, St. Cloud. Last year, during DM Sure's second visit, it was decided to hold the 2006 Monks in the West Conference (dialogue between Buddhist and Catholic monks) here in the fall. This is truly a rare, important and auspicious event, especially in Minnesota, in the conservative Midwest. Many Westerners do not have a clear understanding of Buddhism and cultivation, especially in this audience of mostly Catholics. The lecture focused on introducing the true meaning of Dharma and how it can be applied to and benefit our lives to free us from the suffering of *samsara*.

DM Sure's lecture was entitled "Being Reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss." In a lively and happy way, he introduced recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name, currently the most popular and easiest Buddhist practice in China, Japan and Taiwan, as a new method of cultivation for Westerners. DM Sure also told many true stories, both ancient and contemporary, of practitioners being reborn in the Pure Land, thus letting Westerners know that besides meditation, there is this valuable practice of reciting the Buddha's name to seek rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. Through the interaction with the Catholicism this time, we are positive that Orthodox Buddhism will gradually sprout and grow in the West. A good beginning takes one halfway to success. We hope in the near future, living beings in the Midwest will joyfully have faith in Orthodox Buddhism and receive limitless benefit.