

As I watched the recent leaving home ceremony in the Buddha Hall, I recalled my own leaving the householder's life and entering monastic life. I remember feeling somewhat surprised that I would even be considered as a possible candidate for monastic life. I was such a newcomer, and didn't know anything at all about Buddhism.

I came to CTTB in 2002 to study Buddhism and to do volunteer work, after a "change of heart" about working for the US Peace Corps as a volunteer teacher in South America. When I first encountered Venerable Master's teachings through my good friend, I was overcome with joy and an overriding urgency to learn more of his teachings. So, as I perused the Dharma talk books, I was delighted when I came upon a listing of the various DRBA monasteries.

I was instantly drawn to Malaysia and spent the next two days trying to telephone a monastery listed in Kuala Lumpur -- but to no avail -- I kept getting a recording stating that the telephone circuits were down, and that no calls were going through to Kuala Lumpur. I was somehow directed to telephone CTTB instead, and to try my luck there. Things went smoothly, and within a few months I arrived at CTTB full of hopes of learning and studying Buddhism for a year; and then after a year, returning to the world of work and whatever else awaited me.

Much to my surprise, the year came and went, and I had no desire to leave the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Quite the contrary, I had a tremendous urge to enter the monastic life, which only increased with each visit to the Buddha Hall. I didn't understand the origin of such a powerful wanting to become a nun. I tried to ignore it, suppress it, but the momentum was so very powerful. "This wasn't part of my

最近看到在佛殿舉行的出家儀式，使我回想起自己出家的經歷。記得當時我有些驚訝，因為我是新來的，對佛教一無所知，竟然考慮出家。

二〇〇二年，本來「美國和平隊」派我去南美洲做義務老師，在心意改變之後，我來到萬佛聖城，學習佛法，並當義工。經由好朋友，第一次接觸到上人的法時，我欣喜無比，迫不急待想要多學一點。我仔細閱讀上人的開示，在看到法總各分支道場的名單時，心中非常高興。

馬來西亞的道場，馬上吸引住我，接著兩天，打電話給吉隆坡的道場，但一直打不通，總是聽到答錄機說：「由於電話線路故障，打到吉隆坡的電話，無法接通。」之後，有人指點打去聖城碰碰運氣，結果一切都很順利。幾個月後，充滿希望來到聖城，打算花一年時間來學習佛法，一年過後，就回到工作崗位及處理其他待辦之事。

我很訝異，一年過去了，卻完全不想要離開聖城，反而很急切想要出家，每次踏入佛殿，意念就一次次增強。我不知道這強烈欲望是從哪兒來的。我試著漠視、壓抑，但是這個力量是那樣的強大！「這並不是我的計劃！」我想著。這種感覺是從何而來？是怎

Lucky Encounter the Message to Leave the Home Life

巧遇出家訊息

比丘尼近開 講於2011年4月1日萬佛城大殿

A talk given and translated by Bhikshuni Jin Kai in the Buddha Hall at CTTB on April 1, 2011

佛子 中譯 Translated into Chinese by Fo Zi



plan,” I thought, “Where is this feeling coming from? What’s going on here?” I wanted to understand what was happening, and the origin of this “larger-than-life” newfound idea. So, I went to explain my situation to two of the nuns, to try to get some clarity about the situation. After all, I knew nothing at all about Buddhism, nothing about monastic life, and nothing about the world of the monastery.

The nuns, understanding my naiveté, kindly explained that many people, who enter monastic life, usually make vows in past lives to return as monks or nuns. I had always thought that vows were something which Catholic or Anglican Priests took before committing to the clergy. Never before had I heard of “past life” vows, and was baffled, but relieved by their words and their explanation. This intense feeling of wanting to leave the householder’s life continued to gain momentum, but what had originally seemed like a raging, tumultuous current, now felt calm and peaceful. I had finally begun to experience some relief.

One evening, as I sat in the Buddha Hall during the evening lecture, with the *Lotus Sutra* in hand, my mind became preoccupied and drifted away from the Dharma lecture. While the speaker was lecturing the *Lotus Sutra*, my head became filled with thoughts of the many things that I needed to accomplish, before I could leave the home life. I began thinking that I needed to postpone becoming a nun. “So many things that I needed to get done, and there was not enough time, so I’d better wait until the next opportunity to leave home,” I thought. As I nonchalantly opened the sutra, my eyes fell on Master Hua’s words, “If you have the opportunity to leave the home life, you should take hold of that opportunity immediately.” I immediately closed the sutra and reopened it randomly to another section, but again my eyes fell instantly on Master Hua’s commentary, “You may not have another opportunity to leave the home life again, if you postpone it now.” I thought, “How coincidental.” It was as if I was having a silent conversation with the sutra in my hand.

So again, for the third time I closed the sutra, and made sure to reopen it to a distinctively different section, and sure enough there were Master Hua’s words again, “Not only might you lose the opportunity in this lifetime,” his commentary said, “but you might not have the chance to leave the home life in future lives.” This went on for at least three or four times, with me randomly opening the *Lotus Sutra*, and each time getting a stronger and stronger message about leaving the householder’s life. At this point, I realized that this was not mere coincidence, but that I was receiving a strong message.

I trusted the Venerable Master’s guidance for my life, and immediately abandoned my original thoughts of postponement of any kind. In retrospect, I now realize how foolish I was in treating such a profoundly important matter with such simple-minded naiveté. That was in the fall of 2005. Time has passed and I feel still a beginner, with so much to learn about the Buddhadharmā, that I’ll need a few more lifetimes to gain any level of competency. Anyhow,

麼一回事？我想要了解發生了什麼事，和這種「比生命更重大」的新意念是從哪裡來的。於是我去請教兩位比丘尼，想要澄清疑惑，畢竟我對佛教一無所知，對出家生活一無所知，對整個寺廟裡的世界也一無所知。

兩位比丘尼了解我天真的想法，慈悲告訴我：「許多人出家，通常是在過去生中發過願，要再回來當出家人。」我一直以為這種願，是天主教或是英國聖公會的神父要接受聖職前所發的願。我因從未聽過「過去世」所發的願而困惑，不過經過比丘尼的解釋和鼓勵，我就寬心了。這強烈想要出家的意念，一直持續增強，但本來波濤洶湧似的感覺，卻和緩平靜下來了。我終於開始體驗到一些解脫。

有一天晚上，在佛殿坐著聽經，手中捧著《妙法蓮華經》，若有所思而變得心不在焉。主講者在講經時，我的思緒盤據在出家前要辦的許多事情上。開始想我要晚一點出家，因為「有那麼多的事情待辦，而時間又不夠，最好是等到下次機會再出家。」然而，不經意打開經書，映入眼簾的是上人的法話：「如果你有機會出家，應該馬上把握機會。」我迅速合上經書，然後再信手打開來，看另外一段，上人的法話即刻再度吸引我：「如果你現在延遲的話，以後不一定會有出家的機會了。」我想，「怎麼這麼湊巧？」好像我在跟手上的經書做無聲的對談。

第三次我又把經書合上，確定在一個明顯不同的章節，再次打開，很準確的，上人的法語又出現了：「你不僅會失去這輩子出家的機會，而且在你以後的生命，也可能不會再有機會了。」這情形總共發生了三、四次。每次只要我隨手打開《法華經》，出家的訊息，就一次比一次強烈。這時，我才理解到這不是巧合，而是要讓我收到這個很強烈的訊息。

我相信上人是在指引我，於是馬上放棄本想延後出家的念頭。回顧當初，現在才明瞭，當時的我是多麼愚蠢，竟然把這麼深遠重大的要事想得那麼單純天真。那是二〇〇五年的秋天。時間過去了，但是我覺得仍只是初學，還有許多佛法要學，似乎要好幾輩子才可能通達。不管怎樣，在這時候，我就盡量做好我能做的，盡可能專一其心——這

in the meantime, I'll just do the best that I can, and try to be as mindful as possible, which is often a struggle for me.

One of the practices that I began in recent months, and which has been helpful in bringing me inner balance, is daily recitation of the Universal Door Chapter. I wholeheartedly agree with the Dharma speaker of last Saturday, who said that daily recitation of the Universal Door Chapter helped to calm inner worry and anxiety, and brought benefit and peace to his family during Chile's major earthquake over a year ago. I have been reciting the Universal Door Chapter, in the morning, and again in the evening before retiring -- it helps to greatly pacify my mind, and although I recite it quickly in English in the interest of time, I really appreciate the melodious Chinese version.

Last summer before my grandmother passed away, she was having a very difficult time "letting go." She felt as if she was being tortured, and she would tell me in Creole, that she had many invisible visitors, many of whom she felt were torturing her. Her cries were agonizing, and her weeping and wailing could be heard from a distance. However, after my aunt placed the Great Compassion Mantra recitation recorder in her room, she quieted down immensely, and passed away within two weeks.

The calming and pacifying effect of the Great Compassion Mantra, which my mother witnessed, has left such a profound impact on her, that although she's not Buddhist (she's Anglican), she has not turned off this recorder and has continued to keep the Great Compassion Mantra playing since then. I'm happy to see my family gradually start accepting the Buddhadharma, although they practice various Christian traditions. Years ago, after my mother returned home to the east coast after visiting me here at CTTB, she told me how healthy she felt after eating pure vegetarian food during her stay here. At the same time my younger sister had been diagnosed with diabetes, and we were all worried about her.

Earlier that week, I had read a story in *Vajra Bodhi Sea*, in which a mother prayed to Guanyin Bodhisattva to restore her child's health, and vowed to be a lifelong vegetarian in return. I told my mom this story, and asked her if she wanted to do the same -- to pray to Guanyin Bodhisattva to heal Marjorie of diabetes, and in return, promise to be a lifelong vegetarian. I told her that I wasn't sure if it would work, that it might not work, but if she wanted to, she could just experiment, to see what happens. She agreed to do this, to prayerfully request Guanyin Bodhisattva to help my sister to recover from diabetes, and to continue to eat only vegetarian food. A month later, when my sister went for her medical checkup, the doctors apologized and said that there had been some mistakes, and that current test results showed that she had no signs of diabetes.

I think that my Mum believed the doctors had made a mistake in their diagnosis. I, too, was skeptical at first, but as time goes by, I have heard so many inspiring and magical testimonials of people receiving miraculous help, that I often wonder, "Did the doctors actually make a mistaken diagnosis, or did Guanyin Bodhisattva answer a mother's heartfelt plea?" Amitofo!

往往是我最掙扎的地方。

近幾個月來，開始每天念〈普門品〉，已經帶給我內心的平衡。我完全贊同上週六講法者所說的，每天持誦〈普門品〉，能息心去慮，在一年多前，智利發生重大地震期間，就曾給他家人帶來利益和平安。我每天早上和在晚上休息前各念一遍〈普門品〉，大大安撫我的心緒——雖然為了節省時間，我用英文快快誦，不過也很欣賞悠揚的中文韻律。

去年夏天，在去世之前，我祖母一度因為「放不下」而非常難過。她用克里奧爾語告訴我，彷彿在遭受酷刑，有很多無形的眾生來找她，在折磨她。她哭得很淒慘，在很遠的距離都聽得到。但是，我姑姑在房間播放〈大悲咒〉錄音帶後，她很快就安靜下來，並在兩週之內去世了。

我母親目睹〈大悲咒〉的神效，對她影響很深，雖然她不是佛教徒（是美國聖公會教徒），從那以後，她沒關掉〈大悲咒〉念誦機，一直播放著。我很高興看到家人逐漸接受佛法，雖然她們是修持基督教的各種教派。幾年前，我母親到萬佛聖城來看我，回到東岸後，對我說，在聖城吃素後，她感覺是多麼健康！與此同時，我妹妹被診斷有糖尿病，我們都很擔心。

就在那週的前幾天，我在《金剛菩提海》看到一個感應故事：母親祈求觀世音菩薩，讓孩子康復，發願終生茹素。我告訴了母親，然後問她要不要為妹妹瑪奴芮做同樣的事情，以終生吃素為酬謝，來祈求觀音治好妹妹的糖尿病？我還說，我不確定會不會有效，說不定沒效，但如果她想要這麼做的話，可以試試看，看結果怎麼樣。她同意這樣做，虔誠祈求觀世音菩薩，使妹妹康復，她就繼續吃素。一個月後，妹妹去看醫生，醫生道歉說，弄錯了，目前測試的結果，妹妹沒有任何糖尿病的跡象。

我想我母親相信醫生所說的診斷錯誤。起初我也感到懷疑，可是時日一久，聽到許多令人振奮、奇蹟似的佛菩薩不可思議的感應故事，我不禁懷疑：「是醫生真的診斷錯誤呢，還是觀世音菩薩滿了母親衷心的祈願？」阿彌陀佛！