

五濁衆生令離垢，同證如來淨法身 (續)

—萬佛聖城2014年慶祝釋迦牟尼佛聖誕

May Living Beings of the Five Turbid Realms Be Led from Samsara, and
Together Realize the Pure Dharma-Body of the Thus Come Ones. (Continued)

—The City of 10,000 Buddhas Celebrated Shakyamuni Buddha's Birthday 2014



DHARMA REALM NEWS | 法界音

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Students from Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary Girls School decorated seven bathing-Buddha stands the day preceding the ceremony. The day of the celebration was bright and clear. Over 1,000 people sang the “Praise for Bathing the Buddha,” which follows:

I now bathe all the Thus Come Ones

Who are adorned with pure wisdom and perfect merit and virtue.

May living beings of the five turbid realms be led from samsara,

And together realize the pure Dharma-body of the Thus Come Ones.

As the assembly harmoniously recited the “True Words for Bathing the Buddha,” students guided people to divide into 14 lines. Each person bowed three times to the figure of the baby Buddha standing with one hand pointing to the sky and the other to the earth. As people bathed the Buddha, they were also bathing their own minds and that of all beings.

The mayor of Ukiah and his wife, Phil and Aleya Baldwin, were present at the ceremony and were accompanied by San Francisco State University's emeritus professor of philosophy Ron Epstein and his wife Ocean. While walking toward the big tent to bathe the Buddha, they met Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) staff member Katherine Lam. Mayor Baldwin expressed his surprise upon learning that Katherine had been an analyst at the British Treasury and had resigned to work full-time for BTTS.

Katherine showed Mayor Baldwin and his wife how to bathe the Buddha and told them that they should make a vow as they did so. Mayor Baldwin spoke to the assembly later at lunch and said that he wished that he could have greater calmness and that the community could also be more calm.

Mayor Baldwin said, “The Preamble to the Constitution says one of the reasons for a government is to ensure domestic tranquility. I believe very sincerely that Buddha, Buddhism and Buddhists represent tranquility. One of the beautiful things about the City of 10,000 Buddhas is that it is the epitome of calmness and tranquility. Popular culture in America today is increasingly, in my opinion, frightening, increasingly loud, and increasingly frenetic. I hope with the influence

of the City of 10,000 Buddhas, we can begin to create an example to turn that around.”

Bhikkhu Jin Hsing shared a verse from the *Lotus Sutra* with the assembly: “If one uses a joyful mind to praise and sing the Buddha’s virtues, even if it is just a single word, one has already realized Buddhahood.” He said that praising the Buddha is an act of merit and virtue for our inherited nature. We have less idle thoughts when praising the Buddha and we connect with the Buddha’s bright wisdom. Our bright inherited nature will manifest and shine through the darkness so that the worlds of ten directions will all be filled with harmony, peace, bliss and happiness. This is the great meaning of bathing the Buddha.

Bhikshuni Heng Liang said that one of the requirements for becoming a Buddha is to have blessings. To enjoy the blessings of Buddhahood, one must first renounce worldly enjoyments. Blessings are karmic seeds that are the result of wholesome actions. It is difficult to accrue blessings but easy to spend them. We should dedicate the merit to the awakening of all beings. Shakyamuni Buddha came to the world to teach and transform all beings out of the hope that they will realize their own potential for awakening. On the day of the Buddha’s birthday we remember with deepest gratitude how the Buddha renounced his blessings for the sake of Dharma, for awakening, and for all beings. Let us not fail to work to create blessings, and then to not squander them but cherish them, share them and keep our eyes on the ultimate goal of Buddhahood.

The Abbot of CTTB, Dharma Master Heng Lyu told the story of a disciple of the Buddha, Bhadrīka, who was a prince before leaving the home-life. He ate all kinds of delicacies and slept on luxurious beds. However, he could not enjoy peace of mind because he was worried about possible assassinations or frame-ups. After going forth, he found freedom from worry and affliction. His mind was pure and peaceful and he found the source of happiness within his own mind. Dharma Master Lyu said, “One can feel real happiness in the human and heavenly realms when one’s mind is calm and pure. Worldly happiness cannot be compared to this kind of real happiness.”

The Abbot also said that whatever practice we do, whether reciting the Buddha’s name, reciting sutras, repenting, bowing, or sitting in meditation, as long as we are sincere, we will have pure and liberating joy. However, we must transfer merit and virtue to all beings and dedicate it to their awakening, so that all beings will leave suffering and attain happiness. This will also cause peace to grow in the world, and this is the real meaning of bathing the Buddha.

There was also a Liberating Life ceremony as part of the celebration of Buddha’s Birthday, during which pheasants and turtles were set free in the vineyard and at the pond on campus. Forty-four people took the Three Refuges and received the Five Precepts on the same day, embarking together on the path of spiritual cultivation and awakening, following in the footsteps of the fundamental teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha. ❀

