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Amitabha Buddhist Library in Chicago
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妙叶禪師法語

Quote from Zen Patriarch Miaoxieh

此界釋迦已滅，彌勒未生，賢聖隱伏。

眾生奔波苦海，猶失父之孤兒。

若不以極樂願王為歸，誰為救護。

In the Saha World, Buddha Sakyamuni has already passed, Buddha Maitreya has not yet come, and sages are not present, either.

Sentient beings wander in the sea of suffering, just like orphans who have lost their parents.

If sentient beings do not return to and rely on Buddha Amitabha in the Land of the Ultimate Bliss, no one else can help them.

發行人的話 — 五年工作報告

● 林麗淑

圖書館成立至今已五年了。五年說長不長，但也不是一個短時間。從草創時期搬送經書、法寶出去結緣之“經論流通處”，到現在成為美國中西部地區每週固定念佛共修及講經的一處淨土道場，以及供應各地(包括道場、團體、個人，及幾所外州之醫院、監獄)經書、法寶結緣之佛教圖書館，這裏面有太多義工的心血。

圖書館在 2003 年五月正式成立之前，已聯絡贈送了許多套乾隆大藏經及大量珍貴中、英文及巴利文等經書、佛典給世界各著名大學圖書館、國家圖書館，及重要學術研究機構；五年來，除了每日開門，開放圖書館供大眾館內閱讀、使用電腦及各項設備之外，對各地經書、法寶之結緣流通服務一直持續進行，近年來又增加了敬鑄地藏菩薩聖像(坐姿塑像)，贈送結緣至世界多處等流通服務；預計未來本館在法寶結緣流通這一方面的服務仍將維持不變，也歡迎各地同修大德多多使用本館此一服務。

道場方面，五年以來，念佛堂每週日早上固定念佛共修從未間斷，而自 2006 年初至今，“午間學佛講座”也已持續進行了近兩年半。本館同修臥虎藏龍、人才濟濟，其中，潛心經教、深入用功者不少，我確實將每週的講座視為對大眾所作之修學報告，戰戰兢兢、不敢輕忽；而每週都有幾位同修提出修學中的疑問來研討，問答之間，也頗收教學相長之效。

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基礎教學方面，”兒童學經班”及“幼兒中文唱遊讀經班”都深受歡迎，成效頗佳。兩種基礎教學班都將在今年八月招收新生，其中，”幼兒中文唱遊讀經班”因學生太多(大多數是本地美國小朋友)，可能分成兩班。我們不但歡迎更多學生及家長參與這兩種基礎教學班，更盼望能有更多有心同修加入教師行列，與我們一起從事紮根教育。

當然，所有各項服務、活動，包括近兩年來本館應邀參與之幾項國際佛教會議，及與其他道場、學術及民間機構之間的交流、互動等，對本館同修及我而言，都只是助行。學佛弟子，仍以持戒念佛為根本。

近來世界災難頻傳，最近之四川地震及緬甸風災災情慘重，令人慘不忍聞。淨空老法師為怕災區出現疫情，以大慈悲心，最近於網頁上再次籲請學佛同修持戒念佛；老法師勸請四眾同修“都能發大慈悲心，日夜念佛不斷，回向三界之內五毒生靈解怨釋結，往生淨土，並願世界各地一切眾生消災免難，離苦得樂。”本館除響應捐款賑災之外，也敬祈所有大眾一起發心，勤修懺悔、持戒念佛、回向災民、回向世間。阿彌陀佛！

Publisher's Note — Five-year Report

● Li-Su Tan
● Bert Tan (Translation)

It has now been five years since the library was established. Five years, while not a long time, is not a short time, either. From its start-up as a Dharma items circulation center up to the present as a formal Pure Land school cultivation center in the Midwest with weekly chanting and lectures, and as a library to provide resources to the places which need the sutras and Dharma education materials all over the world, including other Buddhist centers, organizations, individuals, hospitals and correctional centers, there has been tremendous effort invested by our volunteers.

Before the library was formally opened in May 2003, we had distributed many sets of the Qianlong Great Buddhist Cannon and the Tripitakas in both English and Pali to many reputable university libraries, national libraries, and research centers around the world. During the five years, the library was open everyday; patrons could read the Dharma books and use the library facilities. Throughout this time the distribution and circulation of Dharma items continued. In recent years, we also sponsored the making of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva statues (in the seated position), and donated them globally to wherever there were requests. The service of the free distribution and circulation of Dharma items will continue, and we welcome everyone to take advantage of this service.

In the last five years, the weekly Sunday morning chanting has never stopped. The Sunday lunch time Dharma talk has been held for two years. The library is full of talented friends, and many of them have delved deeply into the Dharma teaching. I took the weekly Dharma talk as my study report to everyone; therefore, I appreciated it very carefully and took it very seriously. Every week, many friends asked questions; I myself benefited very much during the discussions of those questions.

For the basics, the Buddhism Class for Children and the Bilingual Chinese Culture and Language Class for Children were very successful. These classes will accept new students and begin new sessions in August. The bilingual class may be split into two sessions because of the class size. We not only welcome more children and parents to join these classes, but also welcome parents to become teachers and work together with us to lay a good foundation for our children.

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All the services and activities, including the participation in the Buddhist forums and conferences internationally and the interactions with other Buddhist centers, academic institutes, etc., are all auxiliary practices. As the Buddha's students, we shall always focus on upholding the precepts and chanting.

Recently, there have been many disasters. The latest were the earthquakes in Sichuan and the cyclones in Myanmar. Venerable Master Chin Kung, worried that epidemics would develop, has once again pleaded on the web for all Dharma friends to uphold the precepts and chant "Amituofo". He pleaded for everyone in the four groups to give rise to great compassion, chant continuously day and night and dedicate the merits to the sentient beings afflicted by the five poisons to help dissolve resentment and hatred, and to be re-born in the Pure Land. He also wished that everyone can remain unaffected by any disaster and not suffer. The library, in addition to donating funds to help the people in the impacted areas, also pleads that everyone diligently repent their karmas, uphold the precepts, chant "Amituofo", and dedicate the merits to the people in the affected areas and to everyone in the world. Amituofo!

圖書館五週年慶祝報導

Report on the Fifth Anniversary Celebration

- 文宣組 蕭蓉 (Eleanor Wang—Publicity)
- 本館編輯室 (Editor's Room)

本館五週年館慶之兩日念佛暨一日「三時繫念」佛事法會，在悟和法師、悟琳法師、照續法師及休士頓、華府地區等淨宗學會同修協助下，已於五月廿五日圓滿結束。舉辦此次法會，主要目的是為四川、緬甸地區及世界各地之受難亡靈祈福追薦，回向眾生消災免難以同霑法益。



(歡迎晚宴及座談。Welcoming and dialogue.)

此次參加法會者除本地同修之外，計有來自休士頓、華府、愛荷華、威士康辛、亞特蘭大、佛羅里達，及加州等地的同修。其中休

士頓有三十一位同修踴躍前來，華府地區同修一行七人開車十一小時，加州地區同修飛行四個多小時，他們的熱忱與虔誠實在令人感佩。同時，芝加哥光明寺住持釋明行法師，亦親自蒞臨道場，參加念佛及法會，為眾生祈福消災，本館特別在此敬致誠摯之謝忱。

此次館慶於五月廿二日上午展開序幕，義工們忙於接機的工作，把一批批外地同修接到本館報到、分配旅館住處。晚餐後，首先林麗淑館長致歡迎詞，接著開始與法師們的座談，聆聽法師們的弘法計劃，輕鬆愉快的達到了聯誼的目的。



(同修們踴躍參加念佛。Enthusiastic participants.)

五月廿三日和廿四日在本館舉行了兩日念佛共修，與會者每日約八、九十餘人，大家均穿著海青，莊嚴肅穆的一起念佛、拜佛、繞佛及靜坐。晚間，法師的開示與學佛問答，給同修們一個難得的受教好機會。



(法師及同修專注念佛。Everyone concentrated in chanting Amitufo.)

五月廿五日本館租用附近之 Meadow Glens Elementary School 體育館，舉行了「三時繫念」佛事法會。會場寬敞，設有莊嚴的佛殿、觀音殿、地藏殿和焦面大士殿。因法會功德殊勝，本館接受各地同修為六道中的家親眷屬祈福及超度，故在觀音殿及地藏殿共設立了數百個牌位，此外會場並備有大量經書與信眾結緣。

「三時繫念」佛事法會，與會者逾一百廿餘人，台北經濟文化辦事處鄭天授處長亦參與第一時法事。三時繫念全程法事以灑淨開始且儀規甚多，法器聲與唱頌聲融合出一股感人肺腑的旋律，既肅穆又婉轉地勸導亡靈懺除結業發願往生。

五月廿六日本館招待外地同修遊密西根湖，並觀賞芝城景點，當日天氣晴朗，大家玩得很盡興，在遊覽車上有說有笑，真是完美的芝城一日遊！晚間於圖書館舉行餐會話別，並請林館長女兒譚瑀文與她的二胡老師項蓓星表演二胡演奏。項老師琴藝高超，為幾日來的館慶活動畫下圓滿的句點。此次五週年

館慶，參會者個個法喜充滿受益良多，感恩大家的參與及護持！

The fifth anniversary celebration program which included a two-day chanting practice and a Thrice Yearning Ceremony with the assistance from Venerable Wu He, Venerable Wu Ling, and Venerable Zhao Xu, and friends from Houston, Washington, D.C., ended perfectly on May 25, 2008. The main purpose for this Dharma gathering was to build good fortune and dedicate the merits to the victims of the earthquakes in Sichuan and the cyclone in Myanmar, and also to the victim's survivors.

Besides local friends, there were friends from Texas, Washington D. C., Iowa, Wisconsin, Georgia, Florida, and from as far away as California. There were thirty-one friends from Houston as well as seven friends from Washington, D.C. who drove eleven hours. The friends from California flew more than four hours. We really praise their sincerity and enthusiasm. The Abbott Venerable Thich Minh Hanh from the Quang Minh Temple in Chicago also participated in the program. We respectfully thank him for his participation.



(三時繫念法會現場。The Thrice Yearning Ceremony.)

The event actually began the morning of May 22. The volunteers were busy transporting friends from the airport to the library, assigning hotel rooms, etc. After dinner at the welcome party, Director Lin delivered a warm welcome to all the friends and venerables who came, followed by a dialog with venerables. Everyone

listened to their reports on the plans to spread the Dharma teaching for the remainder of the year. The welcome party ended happily.

Chanting was held on May 23 and 24. About eighty to ninety people, wearing their haichings, chanted, prostrated and did walking and sitting meditation. In the evening, the venerables lectured and answered questions, which provided everybody with a good opportunity to learn.

On May 25, the Thrice Yearning Ceremony was held in the spacious Meadow Glens Elementary School gym, which the library had rented for the day. The gym was set up with Buddha tables for Buddha Amitabha, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha. We accepted requests from friends who wanted to dedicate merits to their deceased loved ones and to help them transcend samsara. There were hundreds of the name plaques in the Buddha table areas of Avalokiteshvara and Ksitigarbha Bodhasattvas. There were also many Dharma items for free distribution outside the gym area.



(鄭處長、林館長及五位法師合影。TECCC Director, Mr. Cheng, Director Lin, and the five venerables.)

There were over one hundred and twenty participants at the Thrice Yearning Ceremony. The Director of the Taipei Economic and Culture Center in Chicago, Mr. Thomas Cheng, also participated in the first section of the ceremony. The ceremony started with the Purification Ceremony followed by many detailed procedures. The music from the

instrument team and the singing of the participants melded into splendid and moving rhythms as they sought to persuade the deceased to repent their karmas and make vows to be re-born in the Pure Land.



(同修們與法師合影於 Cantigny Park。Venerables and friends pictured in Cantigny Park.)

May 26 was the one-day Chicago city tour. It was a fine day and on the buses the sounds of laughter and conversation filled the air. It was a perfect day trip as everyone had a wonderful time. In the evening, the library held a farewell party. Lotus Tan, a daughter of Director Lin, and her erhu teacher, Ms. Betti Xiang, performed erhu solos and duets. Teacher Xiang's skills and beautiful music provided a perfect interlude to the celebration. Overall, every participant of the celebration left with a joyful mind. The library thanks everyone for their enthusiastic participation and support.

通告 — Announcement



本館義工不足，無法受理舊經書回收服務。

學佛同修及各地大德家中的舊經書、光碟、影帶等，敬請自行流通處理，切勿將之丟棄至本道場給義工增添困擾。謝謝您的合作，阿彌陀佛！

The library is very tight on volunteers and cannot provide recycling services for sutras, books, audio/video media, or other Dharma items. If you have these items, please circulate them yourself. DO NOT leave them at the library and cause extra work for our volunteers. Thank you for your cooperation. Amitufo!

讀者投書

From the Readers

● **Your forever chanting friend**

Wow my first Trice Yearning Ceremony. I wondered how it would be with so many people from so many places. What an exciting time to be a part of Amitabha Buddhists Library in Chicago. As I reflect about my experience in the Trice Yearning Ceremony I remember being nervous, we are a small sangha and so many people would be coming to chant. I wondered, "how is this all going to get done?" Finally, I wondered "would there be anything different after we were done chanting?"

Before the ceremony I was nervous. I had never done this before and worried, "What would happen?" "What will this be like?" "Why is the hosting Venerable not here yet?" "Oh my! The second Venerable can't talk." Good thing there are three Pure land Venerables, and one Tibetan, and one Vietnamese Venerable on hand as well.

During the chanting I felt joy and calmness. It took about 30 minutes of chanting to reach a state of calm with no worries and less wandering thoughts. After chanting for two days I felt like I was leaning on or resting in the Buddha.

After two days of chanting I did not have any "goose bumps" I did not see anything unusual. I simply had joy in my heart with a knowing the Buddhas and Bodisattvas had come from far away to be with us.

The Trice Yearning Ceremony was magnificent. It felt like it keep building and building as we sang each section. It was almost as if it had a life of its own. How marvelous. Being apart of this experience was powerful and yet, very subtle at the same time. There were physical effects of chanting. I felt lighter, happier, carefree and all my muscles ached. I would suppose being bathed in the purity of the Buddhas and Bodisattvas would have some effect on the body.

After experiencing the retreat I now knew the appeal of doing a Trice Yearning Ceremony. In the end we had five Venerables, what a blessing, I met and made wonderful Dharma friends from all over. I was given a great opportunity to do service work and chant for others, got bathed in the purity of the Buddhas and Bodisattvas, after so much chanting was able to rest in the Buddha. There seemed to be a wonderful peacefulness to this event. Even though there were so many details to do, it all got done with the devotion and dedication of many people who love and serve the Buddha.

Thank you Director Li-Su and brother Bert Tan for providing a way place.

Amitufo,

彌陀本懷 — 中峰三時繫念要旨

一、中峰三時繫念法事は元朝中峰國師會集而成，以阿彌陀經及念佛為主軸。

二、三時繫念法事の意義

(一)三時：指早晨、日中、日沒三時，然而後世多把三時連在一起，在日沒前後，一氣做完，不用那麼明細的分早晨、日中、日沒三時，來完成佛事。

(二)繫念：就是世尊在淨宗三經裡面，教給我們修學往生淨土的方法。觀經裡面講的「一心繫念」；無量壽經講的「一向專念」；在阿彌陀經裡面，羅什大師的譯本是「一心不亂」；而玄奘大師的譯本則是「繫念不亂」，所以繫念就是淨念相繼，是念佛的秘訣。

(三)法事：指講經、說法。

(四)三時繫念，包括淨土宗「信願行」三資糧。

第一時總說「信願行」，勸大眾深信西方極樂世界真有無疑。

第二時勸願，發願求生西方淨土。

第三時勸行，一心稱念「阿彌陀佛」名號。

三、一般人只知道逢年過節祭祀一番，到底有沒有用呢？有，就是對先亡的一種慰問，對無祀孤魂表示關懷，所以有用。如果能運用佛法來超度先亡，那更有大作用，以佛法來化解他們的煩惱、怨結，他們就能夠離開鬼道而早生善道，或往生西方淨土。

四、三時繫念佛事は藉佛法的力量，禮請亡靈、孤魂前來道場，聽聞佛法、誦經、念佛、懺悔、發願、受三皈依、回向，以佛法布施供養他們，使令他們心開意解，往生極樂世界。

因此，在三時繫念法事中，一心虔敬莊嚴肅穆，雖為超渡亡靈，實則冥陽兩利。同時也藉佛法僧三寶的力量，與他們一起修行，讓先亡及無祀孤魂包括有形及無形的眾生，超生離苦。這樣才會讓大家獲得真實利益。

五、只要我們以至誠恭敬的心，參加高僧大德慈悲主法啓建中峰三時繫念法事，必有不可思議的功德，您說是不是呢？

(本資料由臺灣臺中慈光圖書館提供)

The Essentials of the Chung Fung Thrice Yearning Ceremony

1. The Thrice Yearning Ceremony was compiled by Venerable Master Chung Fung, an imperial teacher in the Yuan dynasty. The ceremony is based on the *Amitabha Sutra* and on Buddha-name chanting.
2. The meanings of the Thrice Yearning Ceremony:
 - A. Thrice (Three Times). Thrice initially referred to the three times of early morning, midday, and evening. Later, people consolidated the three times and held them together with short breaks in between the sections instead of holding them at different times.
 - B. Yearning: Longing for [Buddha Amitabha]. This is the method Buddha Sakyamuni taught us in the three Pure Land sutras to practice to be reborn in the Pure Land. “Single-mindedness of [Buddha Amitabha]” in the *Amitayur Dhyana Sutra (Visualization Sutra)*, “single-pointed and persistently concentrated on [Buddha Amitabha]” in the *Aparimitayur Sutra (Infinite Life Sutra)*, and “one mind [on Buddha Amitabha] undisturbed” in the *Sukhavati-Vyuha Sutra (Amitabha Sutra)* translated by Venerable Master Kumarajiva all refer to the same method. In Venerable Master Xuanzang’s translation, it was translated as “being mindful and undisturbed.” Therefore, the key to the Buddha-name chanting method is to keep a continuous and uninterrupted pure mind.
 - C. Ceremony: Refers to the Dharma lectures in the three sections.
 - D. The Thrice Yearning Ceremony covers the three assets of Pure Land school—Faith, Vow, and Practice
 - First Section: Building faith on the Pure Land school and on Buddha Amitabha
 - Second Section: Urging us to make unwavering vows to be reborn in Pure Land
 - Third Section: Urging us to diligently practice and to be mindful of Buddha Amitabha
3. People normally pay respect to their ancestors on special occasions. Is it useful, though? The answer is “yes”. It shows our respect and care for our ancestors and those orphaned ones. Using the Dharma to help the deceased transcend benefits them even more. The Dharma will help them lessen their afflictions and anger, and can help them depart the hungry ghost realm and enter the good paths sooner. It even can help them to be reborn in Pure Land.
4. In the ceremony, relying on the power of the Dharma, we respectfully invite the deceased to the Dharma place for lectures, to recite the sutra and to chant, to repent their karmic obstacles, to make their vows, to take the triple jewels and to transfer the merit. We offer them the Dharma, which helps them open up and be reborn in the Pure Land.

Therefore, we should be very sincere in our wish to help these deceased ones. In reality, both the deceased and we are benefited for we are taking the opportunity to practice together with them, and helping them and all beings in all forms end their suffering. Therefore, everyone receives the real benefit.

5. So as long as we participate in the ceremony with a sincere and respectful mind, inconceivably virtuous deeds and merit will definitely result. Do you not think so?

Original from Tze-Guan Library in Taichung, Taiwan
Translated by Bert Tan; edited by Venerable Wu Ling (May 2008)