



淨土

芝加哥華藏淨宗圖書館雙月刊

第四十八期二〇一一年七月

Amitabha Buddhist Library in Chicago
Bi-Monthly Newsletter – July 2011

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印光大師法語 — 臨終助念

Quote from Great Master Yinguang — Assisted Chanting for Dying Parents

念佛之人，當勸父母念佛求生西方。

然欲父母臨終決定往生西方，非預為眷屬說臨終助念，及瞎張羅，並哭泣之利害不可。故欲父母臨終得眷屬助念之益，不受破壞正念之害者，非平時為說念佛之利益，令彼各各常念不可。

如是，則不獨有益於父母，實有益於現生眷屬，後世子孫也。

臨終助念，無論老少，均當如是。

A Buddha-name chanting practitioner should urge their parents to make the vow to be reborn in the Western Pure Land.

One, who wants one's dying parents to be reborn in the Western Pure Land, must explain clearly, in advance, to the relatives and help them understand the benefits of assisted chanting and the detriments of panicking and crying to the dying parents.

One, who wants one's parents to be benefited by the assisted chanting when they are dying and not to be disturbed by anything that could be detrimental to the path to the Western Pure Land, must often explain to the parents, when they are well, the benefits of chanting the Buddha's name and urge them to chant often.

If one can do the above, the benefits will not only be to one's parents, but also to one's immediate relatives and descendents.

To be benefited from assisted chanting, regardless of the dying person's age, all should follow the same principles.

小菩薩夢遊西方極樂世界

A Little Bodhisattva Toured the Western Pure Land in Her Dream

● 趙心竹口述，李萍整理 (Narrated by Emily, Transcribed by Ping Li)

為紀念本館一位同修於5月5日往生，本館已於6月12日舉辦了一場三時繫念法會。感恩照續法師慈悲指導並主持法會，還有同修們的真誠與愛心，法會得以圓滿結束。

本館趙師兄、俞師姐的長女，八歲的趙心竹 (Emily)，曾向她的媽媽表示，她很想去西方極樂世界看一看。俞師姐告訴女兒，可以誠心在佛菩薩前許這個願。

於是，小 Emily 在 6 月 12 日舉辦繫念當日，在家拜佛時，誠心向佛許了此願；而她於當晚即蒙佛加持，於夢中見到阿彌陀佛引領她騎上獨角獸至一神奇之地，看到輝煌的宮殿，蓮花遍地，各色珠寶垂掛於樹上。

讓小 Emily 印象最爲深刻的是在夢中看見的兩位菩薩，一位坐於獅子上，另一位坐於大象上。她早晨醒來後問父母，坐在獅子和大象上的分別是哪位菩薩？趙、俞兩位師兄姐因學佛時間不長，面對女兒這一問題一時也應對不上。爾後俞師姐通過在網絡搜索，才知道原來是文殊、普賢兩位大菩薩。

6 月 26 日趙師兄和俞師姐攜兩愛女參加本館例行的週日共修和學佛講座，當同修們聽聞 Emily 小菩薩的福報感應時，紛紛向她提問。以下是本館眾同修與 Emily 的問答簡記。

(以下“眾”指眾同修，“E”指 Emily，“妹”指 Emily 的妹妹，五歲的趙夢竹)

眾： 你當時在夢中是什麼樣的感覺？

E： 我覺得很快樂。

眾： 有人和你說話嗎？

E： 有，阿彌陀佛教我怎麼騎獨角獸。

眾： 你看到鑽石和各色珠寶在什麼地方？

E： 在樹上。

(此時 Emily 五歲的小妹妹趙夢竹問了個可愛的問題)

妹： 那你有沒有拿一個？

E： 沒有。

眾： 佛菩薩長什麼樣子？

E： 有頭髮，穿各種顏色的衣服，很漂亮，有的坐在蓮花上，有的站在蓮花上。

眾： 蓮花是什麼顏色的？

E： 有黃色還有粉色。

眾： 除了獅子和大象，你看到有其他動物嗎？

E： 有，有孔雀，白鶴，彩虹鳥。

眾： 你在那裡看到小朋友了嗎？

E： 沒有。

眾： 看到有老人嗎？



E： 沒有。

眾： 那邊的人，每個人長得像嗎？

E： 長得很像。

小 Emily 這樣一個年僅八歲的小朋友，對佛教尚未有任何認識，其父母也未曾向她提及過西方極樂世界的種種瑞象，但她如實描繪的夢中場景，皆印證她夢中所到之處即是釋迦佛祖在阿彌陀經上告訴我們的那個美妙的極樂世界。

這是佛菩薩慈悲，以小菩薩的經歷來鼓勵、勸導我們要更加精進念佛、虔誠修行 – 西方極樂世界是確實存在的！

In memory of a Dharma friend who passed away on May 5, 2001, the library held a Thrice Yearning Ceremony on June 12, 2011. We want to deliver special thanks to Venerable Zhao-Xu and to all compassionate Dharma friends of the library who made this special retreat possible.

The eight-year old girl, Emily, the elder daughter of Brother Zhao and Sister Yu, had told her mother that she wished to go take a look at the Western Pure Land. Sister Yu replied to her daughter that she could make the vow in front of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

On June 12, 2011, the day when the Thrice Yearning Ceremony was held, Emily sincerely made the vow when she prostrated to the Buddha statue at home. In her dream that night, Emily was escorted by Amitabha Buddha as she rode on a unicorn to a strange land. She saw splendid palaces, lotus flowers spread all over the ground, and many kinds of colorful jewels hanging on the trees everywhere.

The most impressive scene for Emily was that she saw two Bodhisattvas—one riding on a lion and the other on an elephant. When she woke up in the morning, she asked her parents who the two Bodhisattvas were. The parents, Brother Zhao and Sister Yu, had just begun to learn and practice Buddhism and were not able to answer immediately their daughter's question. Later, they searched the Internet and found out that these two were Manjusri Bodhisattva and Samantabhadra Bodhisattva respectively.

On June 26, Brother Zhao and Sister Yu brought their beloved daughters to the regular Sunday morning practice. When the library friends learned about this interesting story from Emily, they asked her many questions. Below are the brief conversational notes.

(In the following: G—the group; E—Emily, S—Emily's five-year old younger sister.)

G: What did you feel in the dream?

E: I felt very happy.

G: Did anyone speak to you?

E: Amitabha Buddha taught me how to ride the unicorn.

G: Where did you see the diamonds and colorful jewels?

E: They were on the trees.

(Next, Emily's five-year old little sister asked a very cute question.)

S: Did you take one piece of the jewel, then?

E: No.

G: How did the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas look?

E: They have hair, they wear very colorful outfits, very beautiful. Some of them sat on lotus flowers and some stood on lotus flowers.

G: What colors were those lotus flowers?

E: I saw yellow flowers and pink flowers.

G: Besides lions and elephants, did you see other animals?

E: Yes, I saw peacocks, white cranes, and birds in rainbow colors.

G: Did you see any children?

E: No.

G: Did you see any seniors?

E: No.

G: Over there, does everyone look alike?

E: Yes, they look very alike.

Emily is only eight years old and does not know much about Buddhism; her parents had never mentioned to her about the Western Pure Land. However, what she described she saw in her dream reflect what was mentioned to us by Buddha Sakyamuni in the *Amitabha Sutra*, the magnificently beautiful world of the Ultimate Bliss.

This story is truly the compassion of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas; they used the dream of the little Bodhisattva, Emily, to encourage us to practice sincerely and chant diligently—There is indeed a Western Pure Land, the Ultimate Bliss.

My First Buddhist Retreat Experience

● **William T Shehan IV**

Suddenly waking from a dream I felt compelled to write an email to my friend Mr. Bert Tan of the Amitabha Library in Lisle. Looking at the clock through sleep filled eyes, I saw that it was nearly 1am on May 31st. I was not sure why Bert and the Library were foremost in my thoughts but I knew I must write him. Therefore, I did.



I wrote to Bert thanking him for his, and all the people at the library, for their friendship. I also told him that my daughter, Ava, and I planned on coming out again soon. I closed asking if he would let me know of any upcoming events.

A few days later I received a reply from Bert telling me about a "special retreat" on June 12th and that I could read more about it on the Library's webpage. I followed his suggestion and learned that the retreat was the "Thrice Yearning Ceremony" and that it was a very special and powerful ceremony. With just a week, left before the retreat began I made plans to attend

and let Bert know we were coming.

On the morning of the retreat, Ava and I were awake and energized. We arrived at the Library at lunchtime before the retreat began in earnest. As always, we were welcomed and treated as if we were among old friends. I had a few questions about the upcoming ceremony that were promptly answered by Ms. Stephanie Chang. One thing that was mentioned many times was how "powerful" this ceremony was.

At this point, I felt very lucky to be able to attend this retreat but was a little nervous about what to do during the ceremony. Ms. Chang must have noticed my feelings as she had asked Mr. Kim if he would be willing to guide me during the service. Mr. Kim was very kind to help me and with his guidance I was very confident that all would be just fine.

A bell rang to tell us that it was time to begin and everyone went in to the hall. It is difficult to describe the events that occur but I can say that the experience moved me to tears more than once. There were times that I felt that some of my worries lessened and that my family's future was going to improve.

After the retreat was over I drove home feeling calm and serene. Ava too seemed to be relaxed, well as relaxed as a 7 year old can be. When I arrived home, I shared what occurred with my wife and then went to sleep. It was a deep and peaceful sleep without any worries or dreams.

A few days later when the mailman delivered the mail, I received a letter from the Department of Veterans Affairs. I had been working with the VA on a claim that went back to an event that happened to me in 1989 and the VA had yet to finish handling the claim. Figuring the letter told me, once again, that they needed some paperwork, a doctor's evaluation or something I opened the letter out of habit to see what they needed.

When I opened the letter, I was surprised that the VA had decided two of my five claims! In fact, both claims were decided in MY favor. I called the VA to verify that the letter was in fact correct. During the conversation, I was told that I had three appointments for my other claims and if all went well all my claims would be decided by October.

This was wonderful news and I felt that the retreat had something to do with the VA decision. So once again, I wrote to Mr. Tan to inquire about if he had heard of any type of things happening in the past.

In my email to Mr. Tan, I wrote "Is it possible that the merit earned and the karma from everyone gathered helped in this issue?"

To which he replied, "From a Buddhist's perspective, this is definitely the case. Not only you, but everyone in this sincere ceremony is benefited."

I certainly hope that everyone did benefit from this ceremony. I know that my family did and I feel very fortunate that I was invited and able to attend the retreat.

I am thankful to everyone at the Amitabha Library in Lisle for their friendship, patience and assistance to my family and me. Everyday when I meditate I keep them in my thought and dedicate merit to them.

If you are interested in learning more about the Amitabha Library in Lisle please visit the website, call or email the Library. I hope that you will and we look forward to seeing you there.

Amitufo,

William T Shehan IV is a Retired U.S Army

參與三時繫念感言

After Participating the Thrice Yearning Ceremony Special Retreat

● 鄧紀鳳 (Chi-Fang Duong)

建館八年以來，圖書館周日佛堂早課一向是早上十時開始，而且至今從無間斷。但爲了紀念本館一位同修師姐於五月初往生，今年六月十二日的周日佛堂早課打破慣例，提前一小時於早上九時開始，並且舉辦了一場三時繫念法會。

本館大約於師姐往生後八小時獲此噩訊，所有同修無不震驚與悲痛，雖知此師姐世緣已盡，必須捨報往生，我們也應該看破與放下，但哀悼之情不免籠罩每人之心。

同修們以不能爲她臨終助念而深以爲憾，傷感之餘，共同體認當務之急是於七七期間多爲她念經並以念經功德迴向給她，願她亦能發願早日往生西方極樂世界。於是除了周日佛堂早課，全體同修特別爲此位往生師姐誦經、念佛之外，同修們亦自動聚會，於週一至週五下午一至三時在佛堂隨著悟行法師之唱誦光碟爲其念頌三時繫念法事全集。



林館長本擬恭請悟行法師及悟和法師前來本館爲此位師姐主持七七儀式，但因爲悟行及悟和兩位法師已有其他行程而不能前來。所幸多倫多般若講堂的住持—照續法師—同意，於百忙中前來本館主持一場三時繫念法會，實令人感恩不盡。

爲配合照續法師之行程，三時繫念法會必須於兩個多星期之內舉辦，況且，這畢竟是本館第一次舉辦三時繫念法會。各組同修深知責任重大，立即分頭進行，唯恐準備不週；特別是悅眾組，更是兢兢業業的準備。

悅眾組，除譚副館長有過三時繫念法會臨場法器經驗之外，其餘成員，如筆者，皆是第一次上場供養法會大眾。唯恐臨場會有差錯，每一位悅眾都抱著戒慎恐懼之心，自動開始兩週的苦練。幸虧多數成員尚熟悉法器與法會唱腔，經過四次，大約十六小時的集訓之後，悅眾的法器與唱頌也可謂是初具規模，差強人意。

照續法師慈悲有加，特別提前二天蒞臨本館指導悅眾，又接著指導施食、香燈、引禮、與功德主上香等，並指導法會前總排演。經過法師八小時指點後，同修們信心大增，悅眾唱頌也頗具規模，有模有樣了。晚餐前，法師終於說：『明天可以上場了！』。非常感恩法師以平易近人謙虛的態度，不辭疲倦、不厭其煩的再三指導與鼓勵。

六月十二日天氣清朗，一大早供花，供果，供菜，供品，大牌位等完全準備就序。佛堂早課於早上九時準時開始，佛前大供亦於午前如期完成。在午齋的同時，同修們亦佈置三時繫念法會會場。圖書館的佛堂雖小，但是樣樣俱全。三時繫念法會就於莊嚴肅靜唱頌聲中於晚間七時半結束。感謝佛菩薩加持，感謝悟琳法師與凱薩琳師姐特地從印地安那州前來，感謝所有幫忙同修，感謝所有遠道而來參加法會的同修，使法會順利圓滿。

法會完畢後立即聽到師兄們說：『第一次於佛堂舉辦三時繫念法會能有如此表現，實在太好，太不簡單。場地雖小，但非常攝心，感受及感應特別好！』。感謝大眾包含與鼓勵。心想自己疏忽之處實在不敢當，更覺得受之有愧，唯有繼續精進磨練以資回饋。

希望此次繫念法會超薦的亡靈，能放下萬緣，往生西方極樂世界，蓮品增高。也願此繫念法會能幫助解脫各人心中的繫縛。

Since its opening, the library's Sunday morning practice has been held at 10:00am for eight years. An exception was made on June 12, 2011 when the morning practice started one hour earlier at 9:00am and a Thrice Yearning Ceremony retreat was held in memory of a Dharma friend who passed away in early May.

The library received the sad news about eight hours after her death; we were all shocked and grief-stricken. Although we knew that her worldly affinities had ended and when that happened she must have moved to a different world, and that we all should also be aware of these conditions and drop all the attachments, grief was still unavoidable.

All the friends in the library regretted that they had been unable to do assisted-chanting for her during her last moments and recognized that now the most important thing was to recite sutras and chant the Buddha's name and dedicate the merit to her as much as possible during the forty-nine period immediately following her death. We all wished that she could make the vow and be reborn in the Pure Land as soon as possible. Therefore, on every following Sunday, after the practice, we dedicated all the merit to her. In addition, a few friends gathered in the library's chanting hall every Monday through Friday between one o'clock and three o'clock in the afternoon and recited the Thrice Yearning Ceremony text for her by following the audio CD recorded by Venerable Wu Shin.

Director Lin also invited Venerable Wu Shin and Venerable Wu He to come to host a Thrice Yearning Ceremony. Regrettably, they were unable to come because of previous commitments. Fortunately, Venerable Zhao Xu, the Abbott of the Prajna Temple in Toronto, agreed to come, although he too had a very busy schedule. We all greatly appreciated his compassion.

In order to work with Venerable Zhao Xu's schedule, we needed to hold the Thrice Yearning Ceremony within two and half weeks. This would be the first time for the library to hold a Thrice Yearning Ceremony in its own premises without the assistance from other societies. Knowing the big challenge, everyone started working immediately, especially the instrument team members.

Except for Co-director Bert Tan who had played instruments in formal retreat ceremonies, no other member of the instrument team, for example myself, had such experience. Everyone was afraid of making mistakes; therefore, everyone was motivated to carefully and diligently practice playing the instruments. Luckily, everyone was used to playing their instrument and was familiar with the melodies of the praises in the retreat. After the team practiced together four times, a total of about sixteen hours of training, the singing and instrument playing appeared to be acceptable.

With great compassion, Venerable Zhao Xu came two days before the retreat to coach the instrument team. He also taught other members how to perform ceremonial tasks like Meal Offering to the Buddha, lighting the incense, guiding the ceremony, and offering the incense to the Buddhas. He also conducted a rehearsal the day before the retreat. His coaching boosted the confidence level of the instrument team and all others who needed to perform different tasks in the ceremony. The instrument team's singing and playing improved a great deal. Finally, before that night's dinner,

Venerable Zhao Xu announced: "You are ready for tomorrow!" We appreciate very much that Venerable Zhao-Xu enthusiastically, humbly, and patiently taught and encouraged us.

Early in the morning of the shiny June 12, flowers, fruits, dishes, other offering materials, and name plaques of the deceased were all ready and in place. The morning practice started at nine o'clock. The Meal Offering to the Buddha was also completed perfectly before noon. During the lunchtime, the library friends completed the retreat setup. Although the library's chanting room is not big, everything that was needed for retreat was present. The Thrice Yearning Ceremony started shortly after lunch, and ended at about seven-thirty in the evening. We thank the protecting Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Venerable Wuling, Ms. Kathleen who drove Venerable Wuling here from Indiana, all those who helped organize this retreat, and all the participants. They all made the retreat possible and successful.

Immediately after the retreat, I heard friends say "It is very good and not easy to have such a first-time retreat in the library! The hall is small, but the retreat was very focused. The feeling is especially good!" Once again, we thank everyone for your help and encouragement. When reflecting on my own mistakes made during the retreat, I felt a little ashamed to take such praise. I can only practice more diligently to warrant such praise.

I hope that the deceased who participated in this retreat will drop all worldly afflictions and be reborn in the Pure Land in a high grade. I also hope that this retreat will also help ease out attachments.