

Create Blessings for All Through Sincere Repentance

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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[[Master's Teachings](#)] Create Blessings for All Through Sincere Repentance — Guiding Ourselves with Precepts and Managing Ourselves with Love

With advancements in technology, the whole world is now connected and I am able to meet with you all online. Everyone can instantly come before me and interact very naturally with me, and I can also enter the homes of volunteers in dozens of countries in real time. Around the world, our Bodhisattvas have this “spiritual power of transporting themselves” which they diligently use to create blessings. For this I am very happy and grateful!

But although I am grateful to see everyone, our present circumstances are very different from the past. Social distancing, travel restrictions, “shelter in place” and “stay-at-home orders” – these are all completely unprecedented. In the past, the Buddhist practice of a “summer retreat” was created for the sake of protecting both monastic practitioners and the lives of insects and other small creatures that monastics might step on as they wandered around to ask for alms. For these reasons, practitioners would undergo a period of spiritual practice in a secluded place. Now, practices of “isolation” and “lockdown” are used all over the world due to this pandemic.

There are still many uncertainties about the coronavirus, but we know that the virus originally entered humans due to our appetite for meat. The virus originated in wild animals, and as humans and animals interacted in live meat markets, the virus spread to a new host. As I often say, “What happens in this life is ruled by the karmic law of cause and effect.” Karmic causes and conditions lead to karmic retributions. If there is no initial seed, then there will be no fruit, but even if there is a seed, there must be assisting conditions for the fruit to develop. The wave of collective karmic retributions that we are experiencing now takes the form of a disease, and this disease is a result of causes created in the past.

In the past, we have transmigrated endlessly among different forms of life based on the karma we created. When we created blessings, we were born in heaven and enjoyed the blessings of the heavenly realms, and when we created negative karma, we were reborn in hell or the animal realm. When we upheld the five precepts, we returned to the human realm, and when we did not uphold the five precepts, we might have been reborn as animals, led by our karma without any control of our own.

It will take countless lifetimes of spiritual practice before we are able to eliminate all of our karmic debts. You and I were all born in this age and we are all human beings. Now, we find ourselves in the middle of this same pandemic. This is due to our collective karma. All that we can do to change our collective karma is form aspirations to give of ourselves for the sake of the world.

Consider a basin of dirty water that is tilted so that the dirt can gradually drain away; if we continually add fresh, clean water to this basin, then the water in the basin will also become

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clean over time. Likewise, when we ordinary people study the Dharma, we need to keep practicing throughout our lives. In this way, the water of Dharma will continually enter our hearts, and we will rid ourselves of confusion. Gradually, we will grow our awareness and wisdom.

This pandemic is coming upon us like a fierce wind, and it cannot be stopped by human efforts alone. We must face this pandemic with reverence and with gratitude in our hearts. The reverence of the heart is invisible, but it can be seen from our actions. We manifest our reverence by upholding a vegetarian diet. When we adopt a vegetarian diet, we vigilantly observe the precept of not taking life. It is easy to persuade people to do good deeds, but it is difficult to inspire people to adopt a vegetarian diet. However, while it may seem hard to overcome the desire for meat, as long as one has the will, nothing is difficult.

For the past two years I have kept repeating the words, "May we cherish all life with gratitude, respect and love. Together, may we create blessings with harmony and reverence." Confucius once said: "Those who offend heaven have none to whom they can pray." If we do something terrible, we cannot just beg for forgiveness and ask the heavens to save us. Instead, we must express our heartfelt remorse and quickly repent through our actions. One way to express remorse is to keep a vegetarian diet. Thus, we raise our heads toward heaven and sincerely repent, and we bow our heads toward the earth out of gratitude for the sustenance and water it provides us.

There is a Taiwanese saying that goes, "On days with no rain, one must store water for the crops." This means that we should always be prepared. Not only should we take good care of ourselves, but at the same time, we need to cherish our water and other natural resources. We should also sincerely pray for favorable conditions and for the peace and safety of all.

Only when we all come together to create blessed conditions can we bring out the power of love. To do this, we must guide ourselves with precepts and manage ourselves with love. Guiding ourselves with precepts means we must not deviate in our path or make mistakes. We should use the precepts to guide our bodies and minds. Managing ourselves with love means lovingly caring for our own body, speech, and mind. Everything is a matter of mindset. If we can do well in managing ourselves with love, we will naturally uphold the precepts and treat each other with kindness and respect. My hope is that all Tzu Chi volunteers around the world will be able to accomplish this.

(Compiled from Master Cheng Yen's Dharma teaching at the online Global Certified Volunteer Retreat on April 12, 2020)

Teachings by Dharma Master Cheng Yen
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