December 29, 2024

In December of 1974, the Venerable Master Hua traveled to Vietnam to propagate the Dharma, it was a trip of historical significance, planting Dharma seeds for a group of sincere Buddhist disciples from Vietnam to travel to Taiwan exactly fifty years later in December 2024 to take part in a series of very special and meaningful Dharma Assemblies.

On December 8, 2024, the Dharma Realm Books Distribution Association in Taipei was brimming with preparations for a very special and long awaited ceremony later that afternoon – the Transmission of the Precepts for the Deceased. After the noon meal, volunteers went downstairs to the lobby to welcome and check in the registrants. Among the participants who came to receive the Precepts for the Deceased was a group of sincere Buddhists traveling from a country more than 1300 mile away – Vietnam. Through weeks of planning and preparation, fueled by long held dreams and aspirations to come to Taiwan to receive the Three Refuges and Five Precepts, the Group finally made it to also take part in the very special Precepts for the Deceased Ceremony to cross over their loved ones. The ripening of causes and conditions for this rare chance to receive the Precepts for the Deceased can be said to come from karmic seeds planted in the past. Touchingly visible were the sincere reverence and deep gratitude clearly expressed on everyone's faces, from bowing to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, paying homage to the Venerable Master Hua and his Śārīras, together with the Śārīras of Venerable Master Hsü Yün, to taking in all that is unfamiliar and yet also familiar in the sacred Bodhimaṇḍa of a foreign country. Some members were moved to tears upon beholding the Venerable Master's compassionate countenance and paying homage to the precious Śārīras of our revered Teacher and Grand Teacher, as if finally coming home to be warmly received by their protective and kind embrace.

During the Precepts for the Deceased Ceremony, the ancient and timeless chants of the sacred liturgy resonated deeply in everyone's hearts, transcending linguistic boundaries, stirring emotions that can only be felt, yet hard to express, tears flowed forth. Each plaque connected to each person holding the plaque had a special story to tell, warmly enveloped in heartfelt prayers and thoughts of loving-kindness. In the presence of the Triple Jewel with the collective energy of the Great Assembly, holding plaques of loved ones, everything culminated in this moment – to help one's loved ones attain ultimate liberation and be reborn in Amitābha's Pure Land of Utmost Bliss.

With the Ceremony completed, there was a change in the air, everyone felt lighter in spirit and happier at heart as the Group assembled to take pictures with the Dharma Masters, filled with Dharma joy.

The next day, on the evening of December 9, the Group arrived at Amitābha Monastery in Hualien. As the Group entered the Dining Hall to have dinner, a touching scene unfolded as two members of the Group immediately proceeded to the image of the Venerable Master and bowed repeatedly with utmost sincerity, as if the Venerable Master was alive right in front of them, smiling compassionately, warmly gathering them in. Perhaps it is so.... for in that sacred moment, hearts touched.

After dinner, the Group took part in the Evening Ceremony. With CTTB's Daily Recitation books in hand, everyone tried their best to follow the rhythmic chanting, taking in the melodic tune of the all too familiar Amitābha Sūtra in a different language. Reciting Amitābha Buddha's name, whether walking or sitting, a sense of peace, serenity and harmony pervaded the spacious Buddha Hall, permeating one's body and mind. The energy was of oneness.

After the Evening Ceremony, Dharma Master Yun prepared a special lecture recounting the Venerable Master's trip to Vietnam in December of 1974, amidst the unsettling chaos of a civil war. The trip was historically noteworthy on many levels, planting Bodhi seeds that would ripened for Vietnamese Buddhist disciples in the years to come. Following the decade of the early 1980s, our Teacher established the Buddhist Council for the Rescue and Resettlement of Refugees at CTTB, providing vocational and English training to Indo-Chinese refugees, paving a path for the immigrants to start new lives in the country they now call home.

It was very special to be together with the Group listening to stories of our Teacher's affinity with the Vietnamese people. The lecture vividly brought to life the notable events of forty/fifty years ago, there were stories within stories, the accompanying pictures perfectly dovetailed the narrative, the audience felt as if transported back in time, yet the constraints of time only permitted short windows into past historical events. All too soon it was time for the Group to depart, looking forward to returning the next day for one of the most life changing moments in their lives.

The next morning, the Group arrived bright and early. In the early light of a fresh new day, under the azure sky, amidst the green trees and verdant mountains, everyone basked in the pristine air and serene surroundings. The spaciousness of the outer landscape mirrored the openness of one's inner being, there was childlike wonder as the Group explored the spiritual grounds of Amitābha Monastery. One by one, members of the Group bowed sincerely to the compassionate statue of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva standing majestic over the open vista, her pure white silhouette, holy and ethereal, awe-inspiring yet a sacred sanctuary for all who comes to pay homage.

From the second floor Buddha Hall, the resonant sound of the bell resounded, signaling everyone to assemble for the Transmission of the Eightfold Vegetarian Precepts. Bowing down, with the deeply stirring tune invoking the name of our Founding Teacher, Śākyamuni Buddha, filling the Buddha Hall, both outer and inner worlds merged as one recalls past misdeeds and repents of them. Once mistakes are repented, one is renewed, ready to receive the Precepts. The Precepts Transmission was a dignified and adorned ceremony; the solemn ritual of requesting the Precept Masters prefaced the Ceremony with a sense of reverential respect for the Precept Dharma. After the Precept Ceremony, Dharma Master Sure joined the Assembly to give a short Dharma talk, providing encouragement and fuel for everyone traveling on the Path of cultivation. How blessed and precious it is to meet Good Knowing Teachers and together with Noble Dharma Friends, be able to receive the Eightfold Vegetarian Precepts and live the life of a monastic for even one day and one night.

Following the Meal Offering, as the Assembly entered the Dining Hall for the noon meal, the aroma of food prepared with care by the dedicated Dharma Masters and volunteers greeted everyone. Some members of the Group shared that they were deeply touched by the heartwarming meals partaken at the Monastery. During the meal, Dharma Master Yun showed a short documentary chronicling the Venerable Master's Dharma propagation in Taiwan. Both our Dharma bodies as well as physical bodies were nourished.

After the noon meal, in the vast spaciousness of the Monastic grounds, the Group proudly unfurled the beautiful banner displaying in three languages:

Buddhist disciples from Vietnam Pay Respects to DRBA Monasteries in Taiwan

2024年越南法界朝聖團

Phật Tử từ Việt Nam Triều Bái Tổng Hội Phật Giáo Pháp Giới tại Đài Loan

With the majestic Buddha Hall as the backdrop, everyone gathered for group pictures with the Dharma Masters, faces luminous with tangible joy.

In the afternoon, the Ceremony for the Three Refuges and Five Precepts took place on the last day of the Group's trip, yet it marked a new beginning for everyone. The Group shared that the Refuge and Precepts Ceremony was one of the most important and sacred moments in their lives, a dream coming true to finally become grand disciples of the Venerable Master Hua. After the Ceremony, Dharma Master Sure took time to answer questions from the Preceptees who were grateful for his instructions. When it was time to take the group picture, the Buddha Hall was filled with joyous energy, everyone basked in the compassionate light of the Triple Jewel.

The most meaningful and joyful moment for the Group was receiving the Precept certificate. It was deeply touching to witness the sincere manner in which the Preceptees received the Precept certificates. When Dharma Master Yun passed out the Precepts certificates with the advice to "Cultivate well", one by one the Preceptees bowed deeply or even knelt down with utmost respect and deep gratitude to receive the Precept Certificate, a tangible symbol of everyone's dream coming true – truly precious and sacred! The glowing radiance on everyone's faces reflects the inner happiness they feel throughout the trip.

The trip lasted only a short four days yet filled with innumerable moments of joy and memorable Dharma teachings that the Group will cherish on the Path of cultivation. The Venerable Master often said,

"Don't come to the mountain of treasures and leave empty handed".

Having traveled to the mountain of jewels, the Group returned home brimming with treasures of Dharma gems, filled with lasting gratitude, having found a true place of spiritual refuge.

Bowing in Respect,
黃果心 頂禮
Disciple Huỳnh Quả Tâm