

CONTENTS

02p About the Cover

The Seokgatap (Sakyamuni Pagoda) and the Dabotap (Pagoda of Many Treasures)

04p Dharma Talk

Dharma Talk to Mark B.E. 2654 Buddha's Birthday

Congratulatory Remarks to Celebrate the Buddha's Birthday

08p Special

COVID-19 and the Global Network of Compassion

12p Buddhist Culture

Faith caved in stone: Seokgatap and Dabotap

16p Teaching of the Buddha

Life of Sakyamuni Buddha

24p Jogye Order News

President of the Jogye Order Asking for Assistance for the Exhibition of the Fasting Buddha Statue in Korea

Haein-sa Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the Korean War

28p Overseas News

Buddhist Way of Handling COVID-19

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**The Seokgatap
(Sakyamuni Pagoda) and
the Dabotap (Pagoda of
Many Treasures)**

The Seokgatap (Sakyamuni Pagoda) and the Dabotap (Pagoda of Many Treasures) in Gyeongju City are two of the finest stone pagodas of Korea.



Dharma Talk to Mark B.E. 2654 Buddha's Birthday



From his dwellings in the Tusita Heaven, the Buddha came down to the earth riding on a white elephant and went into the womb of Queen Maya. After ten months, he was born out of her right side all glowing golden.

As soon as he was born, he took seven steps in four directions, pointing toward the earth with one hand, and the heavens with the other, and declared:

“I alone am the honored one in the heavens and on earth.”

Choensang cheonha yua dokjeon

It has been ever so magnificent.

The Buddha's birth in this world amid human beings is the manifestation of Great Loving-kindness and Compassion to save all sentient beings in this universe.

It is a declaration about the most fundamental human nature, that we are all already enlightened buddhas, and

That all life forms are sacred.

His birth shines the radiant light of wisdom on humankind,

And shows us the Path that we all must tread on.

The darker the night is, the more desperately we

seek the lamp. The harder the times are, the more clearly we must understand and uphold the reason behind his manifestation among us in this samsara, the endless cycle of birth and death.

It is an opportunity for all Buddhists to light a lotus lantern of peace and harmony for all beings.

Let's all light the lotus lantern of Great Luminosity with a prayer to

Delight our neighbors,

Relieve them of suffering, and

Rejoice their good fortunes.

The novel coronavirus pandemic threatening the world is caused by the unrestraint plunder of the earth's natural resources and resulting destruction of environmental pollution and ecosystem. We have no one else to blame except for our own extreme greed and selfishness.

The world helplessly fell victim to this virus, revealing the limitations of science and technology. Now, the eastern culture of mind cultivation is drawing the attention of the people all over the world.

Cheonji yeoa donggeun

Manmul yeoa dongche

The earth and the heavens all share the same root with me,

All beings and I share the same body.

The nature, whether sentient or not, are all interconnected, arising from each other.

No one can exist without one's neighbor, no one can live without the earth supporting and grounding us from underneath. All things in this universe and I are not two separate beings.

Destruction of nature and ecosystem equals crisis to humanity.

Everyone on this earth!

Life after life, we keep wishing for the freedom from suffering and illnesses, praying for a life of abundance, success and ease. Then, just hold onto the *hwadu* of “What is my true self before I was born of my parents?” and investigate it tirelessly and relentlessly, day and night, awake or asleep, maintaining the absolute single-minded focus on it. Then, the ensuing radiance of wisdom will show you the right path for all things, enthroning you as the master of Truth and guaranteeing you a life of peace and happiness.

All of you must want to know the true face of the Buddha.

Slinging this Dharma staff over the shoulder, without sparing a look at the crowd, Walking straight into the hundred thousands of mountain peaks.

May 30, B.E. 2564

**H.E. Jinje, Supreme Patriarch,
The Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism**

Congratulatory Remarks to Celebrate the Buddha's Birthday



It was an inconspicuous beginning, with a baby boy born in a small kingdom nestled at the foot of a Himalayan mountain. Before long, however, the news that a true spring had come to the earth spread throughout the world, preceded by blooming flowers. The little boy's declaration of "Three realms are nothing but suffering, but I will bring peace to them," uttered upon his birth, reverberated in the minds of the people all over the world.

The Buddha's Birthday celebration this year is special. It has been traditionally honored on the 1st of April in the lunar calendar, but we have extra lunar month this year, and the ceremony is held not in the first April, but in the leap month April. COVID-19 has changed everything we have taken for granted. This dangerous virus that has threatened so many lives forced the entire nation to practice social distancing, and the Buddhist community acted swiftly and decisively to join the nation's effort to fight this deadly disease.

Not only did we postpone the Buddha's Birthday celebration by one month, we also decided to cancel the Lotus Lantern Festival altogether, the biggest religious event of the year for all Buddhists around the nation, because there can be nothing more precious than the safety of the nation and the health of its people. During that extra lunar month, while the whole country was waiting for the Buddha's Birthday celebration to be resumed, the monastics and the laity alike joined in the ardent prayer for the well-being of Korean people, though they were no longer allowed to congregate together.

These were not easily made decisions. However, there was no doubt or hesitation either, because Buddhism is nothing if it is not based on the Great Loving-kindness and Compassion as expressed so clearly in the Buddha's first words after his birth.

But those hard decisions were not

the extent of the compassion in action practiced by the Buddhist community. Receiving the emergency disaster cash from the government, 5,000 monks and nuns donated the money to be used for those who are less fortunate. The Buddhist temples and organizations throughout the nation are busy extending helping hands to the medical professionals who are on the front line of the war against the virus, and rendering support to our neighbors in need of our assistance. Deeply impressed in the DNA of all Korean Buddhists is the tradition of defending the country and bringing comfort to its people in times of crisis. The Korean Buddhists are already establishing the Buddha Land on this earth, where a *buddha* is born every day, and the compassion is the rule of the day. It is first and foremost the concerted efforts of the four-fold community that enabled this auspicious event today.

We also owe special thanks to President Moon, as well as to the government officials, health workers and citizens. Without the sacrifice and commitment they have shown during the coronavirus crisis, today's ceremony would not have been possible. In a sense, everyone in Korea has facilitated and contributed to today's celebration of the Buddha's Birthday. We Buddhists perhaps owe the biggest thanks to the people of Korea.

From COVID-19, we learned firsthand, and at great personal cost, how even these tiniest of creatures invisible to our naked eyes can rock the whole world. Master Euisang taught us in his *Beopseong ge*, or *Song of Dharma Nature*, that 'All is in one, and one is in all; every grain of sand contains the cosmos in its entirety.'

It is not just each coronavirus that contains the entire universe in it. Each of us is sacred, a universe onto itself, each already complete

and whole. Everything we think, say and do cannot help but affect the whole world at every level. The world does not exist separately from us; it is renewed and recreated at every moment by us. There is no objectively perceived, absolute reality apart from the perceiver. Therefore, if we all think, speak and act like a *buddha*, the majestic Buddha Land as described in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (The *Flower Garland Sutra*) will unfold on this earth.

This year, the Jogye Order has conducted a large scale survey asking many monks and nuns about the future of Korean Buddhism. Surprisingly, the overwhelming majority prefers to focus on how Korean Buddhism can serve the fast changing society in new and innovative ways, rather than ruminating over the past, no matter how glorious our history has been. The Jogye Order will continue with the Million Vows Assembly campaign, launched to better implement the wishes of monastics and lay faithfuls. It will

establish a variety of theories and practices by which the Buddha-dharma can be better introduced to the benefit of the modern society, and train people who will dedicate their lives to the betterment of all sentient beings' lives. The million Bodhisattvas with a million different vows will go to a million different corners of the world, turning each corner they reach into a flower blooming Buddha Land in a million different ways.

I pray that everyone's life may be rich with wise and compassionate blessings of the Buddha.

May 30, B.E. 2564
Most Ven. Wonhaeng
President of the Jogye Order of
Korean Buddhism

COVID-19 and the Global Network of Compassion

On May 21, the monastics and the administrative staff working at the Administrative Headquarters of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism delivered 480,000 facial masks to 2,470 Buddhist temples and the neighbors in dire need of them all over the country to honor the upcoming Buddha's Birthday celebration ceremony.

Most Venerable Wonhaeng, the president of the Jogye Order also sent the letter of gratitude along with the masks to the abbots, abbess, monks and nuns of the Buddhist temples around the nation.

In the letter titled 'Letter of Gratitude to the Temples,' Most Ven. Wonghaeng thanked the sangha saying, "You all faithfully followed the guidelines of the Jogye Order, motivated by the Mahayana vow of saving all beings, despite the difficulties each temple must endure. Thanks to your courage and devotion, Korean Buddhism has faced the challenges of the time head-on and came out of it victorious."



The monastics and the administrative staff working at the Administrative Headquarters of the Jogye Order joined 'Thank-you Challenge' campaign to cheer the health workers on the front line fighting coronavirus.

He continued, "However, the crisis seems to drag on, despite our earlier wishes of it ending soon. We must be prepared for the long-term stand-off by trusting the Order and its guidelines to keep the temples as coronavirus-free zone, and devote ourselves to practice until the day when the crisis is over."



The monastics and the administrative staff working at the Administrative Headquarters of the Jogye Order are packing 480,000 facial masks at the Korean Buddhist History and Culture Museum on May 21 designated to 2,470 Buddhist temples. These masks will be used at the temples during the Buddha's Birthday celebration ceremony and to be distributed to those who are in dire need of them.



COVID-19 and the Global Network of Compassion

Donghua Zen Temple and the Buddhist Funding Society of the Hunan Province



Ven. Geungok, the director of General Affairs donated the masks received from abroad to Dream In Us Foundation.

China reciprocated the Jogye Order's earlier generosity by reaching out helping hands to Korea, as Donghua Zen Temple in China and the Buddhist Funding Society of the Hunan Province each donated 100,000 fast masks and 250,000 yuen (KW 43million) to the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism.

Last February, the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism (president: Most Ven. Wonhaeng) provided 100 million won as an emergency relief to China through the Chinese embassy in Seoul, as well as the face masks donated by Cheonggye-sa Temple, when the country was threatened by the novel coronavirus scare erupted in Wuhan.

When Donghua Zen Temple (abbot: Ven. Wanxing, Shaoguan City, Guangdong Province) communicated its intent to donate 100,000 face masks to the Jogye Order, they sent Korea a letter with a phrase "A gift of one water droplet will



Most Ven. Wonhaeng and Ambassador Xing Haiming at the ceremony to deliver the Jogye Order's financial aid to China

be returned in a gushing stream." The donations from China was celebrated in a ceremony held on April 9, at 3:30pm at the Korean Buddhist History and Culture Memorial Hall, attended by Most Venerable Wonhaeng, the president of the Jogye Order, Ambassador Xing Haiming, Mr. Byeonggu Choi, the director of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and Venerable Seonghaeng, the abbot of Cheonggye-sa Temple among others. The 100,000 face masks delivered by Donghua Zen Temple were handed over to Seoul municipal government, hospitals and the Jogye Order temples, which in turn gave out donated masks to those who were in dire need of them.

The money from the Buddhist Funding Society of the Hunan Province, which was received through the Chinese Red Cross, will be contributed to the coronavirus prevention and containment fund managed by the Association of Korean Buddhist Orders (Secretary General: Venerable Seonghwi). 8,000 face masks donated by Taiwan's Fo Guang Shan Monastery in March were also distributed to social welfare and immigrant labors' organizations.

As the whole world has been plunged into a global crisis due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, the Buddhist communities of the two countries helped each other in the common aspiration to save lives and achieve peace. In recognition of how precious such aspiration is, Most Venerable Wonhaeng, the president of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism sent a letter of appreciation to the Chinese donors.



Faith caved in stone: Seokgatap and Dabotap

The Seokgatap (Sakyamuni Pagoda) and the Dabotap (Pagoda of Many Treasures) in Gyeongju City are two of the finest stone pagodas of Korea. While most pagodas are named after the temple or the numbers of its storied layers, Pagodas are only two of their kind in Korea holds their unique names originating from their mythology.

The two pagodas are said to have been created from the chapter of “the Emergence of the Treasure Tower” in the Lotus Sutra. According to the Lotus Sutra, Prabhutaratna manifested himself from the ground as a pagoda of seven precious jewels, to bear witness to the truth of the Dharma taught by the Sakyamuni Buddha. The Sakyamuni Buddha and Prabhutaratna were known to have been seated next to each other on the lotus flower platforms at this moment. The two pagodas were thus erected on the shared ground, in depicting Sakyamuni Buddha and Prabhutaratna Buddha.

Constructed during the Silla Kingdom (751 CE),

the architectural pagodas display unique visual presence. The Seokgatap portrays the masculine beauty of strength and solidity, while the Dabotap reveals the subtle feminine beauty of delicate splendor.

Seokgatap is one of the finest pagodas of the Unified Silla Period, displaying its perfect proportion in minimal design. The firm stereo bases (*Gidan* or base) are two-storied, with the three-storied main body rising proportionately smaller in width, creating a harmonious and firm outline. Standing apart in its presence of sophistication and charm, the Dabotap boasts its own architectural beauty. Built upon the base of four sets of steps, the main body stands in four perfectly fitted granite pillars, elevated on a platform with a hollow center. There originally stood four stone lions guarding each direction, but the pagoda is now left with one lion, with the other three having been stolen. The first story of the rectangular foundation and the

second story of the delicately complex octagon come together and create a remarkable contrast. The following is the mythology of the Seokgatap and Dabotap. A renowned stonemason of the Baekjae Kingdom, Asadal, traveled from afar to build the pagodas in Gyeongju City. His wife Asanyeo, who missed him dearly after long years of separation, traveled to the city to be with her husband. When the abbot of the temple asked Asanyeo to await her husband by the pond across the valley, he told that she will know of the completion through the reflections of the pagodas on the pond. Compelled to wait, Asanyeo sat by the pond and stared for the pagodas’ reflections. On the day of the completion after the endless wait, Asanyeo saw only the reflection of the Dabotap. Calling out for Asadal in despair, Asanyeo threw herself into the pond, as into the arms of her beloved husband. Upon hearing of her death, Asadal followed her into the pond. The

Seokgatap is thus also known as “the Pagoda of No Reflection.”

Seokgatap and Dabotap together stand at the front court of the Main Dharma Hall in the Bulguksa Temple. In their lofty heights, the two pagodas exhume the presence of harmony as they face the Main Dharma Hall and the *Jaha* Gate. As all architectural structures of the Bulguksa Temple standing in testament to the Buddhist nation of Silla, Seokgatap and Dabotap represent the profundity of the Dharma taught by the Sakyamuni Buddha and Prabhutaratna (Buddha of Abundant Treasure, his pagoda of abundant treasure will rise from the ground when Lotus Sutra is read).



Life of Sakyamuni Buddha

1) Life as a pampered princeling

Around 2,600 years ago, there was a small kingdom called Kapilavastu in the Himalaya mountains. One day, Queen Maya, the wife of its monarch Suddhodana, had a dream of a white elephant with six white tusks entering her right side and conceived a child.

Ten months later, Prince Siddhartha (which means "he who achieves his aim.") was born, under the branches of a tree of no sorrow in Lumbini. He was the future Buddha, the noblest saint who would save all sentient beings from suffering. It was said to be a full moon day, and Korean Buddhists celebrated his birthday on the eighth day of the fourth month in the lunar calendar.

As soon as Siddhartha was born, he took seven steps and declared "I alone am the honored one in the heavens and on earth; three realms are nothing but suffering, but I will save them all."

The seven steps Siddhartha took symbolize the great leap of achievement toward transcending the samsaric suffering from the endless cycle of rebirth. And his first words, "I alone am the honored one in the heavens and on earth" were not uttered in egoistic arrogance, but a brave and confident declaration about the most fundamental human nature, that we are all dignified beings, already enlightened *buddhas*.

Overjoyed by the arrival of the crown prince, King

Suddhodana invited seers and hermits from the forest to the palace. They observed the infant and all of them prophesized, saying, "The crown prince has two possible future paths in front of him. He will either become a great king, a *chkravartin*, who is a virtuous ruler of the world, or a great religious leader who would bring the radiant light of wisdom to this world."

King Suddhodana's delight at hearing their prophesy, however, was short lived as his wife soon died and Siddhartha was brought up by his maternal aunt, Maha Pajapati.

King Suddhodana hoped to steer his beloved son in the direction of the throne. A bright and gifted child, Siddhartha started receiving at the early age of six or seven the best education and training to prepare him to become great statesman as well as a general.

One day, an agricultural festival was hosted in Kapilavastu. Despite the hustle and bustle of the crowd attending the festival, prince Siddhartha sought out a quiet spot under a large tree and spontaneously entered a state of *jhana*, or a calm meditative absorption. Belatedly noticing Siddhartha was gone, people started searching for him until they found the missing prince sitting in deep meditation under a large tree, lost to the world. Awed at the miraculous sight of the shadow cast by the tree not moving at all, King Suddhodana bowed to his own son in reverence.

2) Facing the fundamental questions of life

Worried to see his son frequently fall into a deep contemplation, Prince Siddhartha's father arranged his marriage to Yasodhara, the intelligent, beautiful and proud princess of the neighboring kingdom Koliya, thinking married life would settle his son's mind. Biographies vary as to when the marriage happened, but it is believed by many that he tied the knot with Yasodhara at the age of 19.

As a prince, Siddhartha lived a sheltered life, raised with great care in the lap of luxury and blissful ignorance in the opulent palace. Perhaps he was mistaken that the world in general was full of carnal pleasures and youthful romps his father made available to him. But one day, a realization struck him after a quiet rumination.

"No one can escape the fate of getting old, getting sick and dying eventually. Yet, when we see that inevitable fate befall on others, we make a face and turn our back on them, or we pity them as if we would never be subject to the same fate. We do not realize it would someday be our own lot, without exception. How come?"

There is a legend that showcases Siddhartha's question more dramatically. The prince one day rode a chariot driven by his charioteer to the four outermost gates of the castle. At each gate in the east, south and west, he was exposed to the sight of the old, the sick and the dying respectively. To the prince, deeply disturbed by what he saw, the charioteer revealed the truth so far hidden from the prince by his father that no one is free from the process of aging, being diseased and dying. Horrified by the prospect of what to come, the

young prince went to the north gate as his last stop, where he encountered an ascetic who renounced the world and was devoting his life to spiritual practice. Seeing how free and happy the ascetic looked, unbound by mundane concerns and anxiety, a woman who happened to pass by mused aloud, "How admirable! His parents must be so happy to have such exceptionally accomplished son." The woman's words left a deep impression in Siddhartha's mind. His excursions to the four gates catalyzed his determination to renounce his worldly life and seek true, lasting happiness through spiritual enlightenment.

The ultimate happiness in the spiritual sense is nirvana. The literal meaning of the term is "blowing out" of the fire, and the fire here means the flames of old age, sickness and death that keep blazing in people's mind and body and trapping all beings in endless cycle of suffering. Nirvana is the state where this fire is finally extinguished, leaving only the profound happiness and quietude behind. Siddhartha found immense comfort by envisioning such happiness that transcends all human suffering.

Birth is foredoomed to death, after inescapable indignities of debilitations brought on by the old age and illnesses. Haunted by vague yet impending sense of annihilation, people would do anything to deny and bury the reality of old age and death in bigger and flashier pleasures. Yet, when finally faced with the cessation of existence, the inevitable conclusion of all that exist, we go down on our knees in defeat. When did this endless cycle of suffering began?

Siddhartha's trip to the four gates of the castle was his first step in his grand journey to discover the

truth of self as well as the true nature of reality, in devoting his life to find the answer to the most fundamental conditions of human existence.

3) Renunciation

Siddhartha made up his mind to devote his life in seeking the spiritual truth, but King Suddhodana was desperate to stop his son from abandoning the life of a royal prince, and pledged to give him anything he wanted if he changed his mind. However, prince Siddhartha answered,

“If you can give me the eternal youth and the body will never suffer illness, I will stay in the palace.”

Alas, gift such as immortality, everlasting youth or the freedom from sickness is not something even the most powerful ruler of the world could grant. Shortly after the birth of his son Rahula, Siddhartha departed the palace in the middle of the night without saying goodbye to his family.

The whole world was dead to the world, but Siddhartha drove his horse hard toward the gate of the castle. Despite thundering of the hoofs his horse made, no one woke up from the sleep. Some biography said the gods in heavens plunged the kingdom into a deep slumber so that the prince could escape, because they ardently wished the birth of an awakened being who could teach the world the wisdom of how to liberate all beings from suffering.

When Siddhartha reached the castle gate, its

doors were closed. But the horse never stopped, just jumped right over the castle wall and brought him to the other side.

Out of the palace finally, leaving his horse and attendant behind, Siddhartha journeyed on into the forest. He cut his hair and beard, and changed into the clothes he swapped with a hunter he came across. Now perfectly indistinguishable in his look from a wondering ascetic, he continued to travel in search of a spiritual teacher. He was 29 years of age when he abandoned his beloved wife Yasodhara and his only son Raula, and his biographers said it was the eighth of the second month in the lunar calendar, which is now celebrated as Buddha's Renunciation Day by the Buddhists all over the world.

The world still praises Siddhartha's great courage in giving up all his material possessions and forgoing his royal position as an heir to a kingdom for a higher, spiritual purpose, which is to save all beings by showing them how to be liberated from suffering.

4) Searching for teachers

Dominant religious tradition of Siddhartha's time in India was Brahmanism, which was an ancient form of Hinduism that worshipped Brahma as the creator of universe and all beings in it. It gave prominence to Brahmins, the priestly class of the society. According to Brahmanic belief, Brahmins were the only ones ordained by gods to officiate religious rituals and ceremonies to commune with gods, therefore

granted the highest caste in the society.

Meanwhile, the *sramana* movement arose in the Indian subcontinent in defiance against the Vedic traditions. *Sramana* means one who toils, or exerts themselves for higher religious purpose. *Sramanas* rejected the authority of the Vedas, the most sacred texts of Hinduism, renounced their secular identities and lived the life of deprived beggar living on alms.

Now a wandering mendicant, Gautama headed toward Vesali where the most innovative religious theorists and philosophers of his time could be found. He met a great yogi Alara Kalama there who taught Gautama a form of meditation known as the *jhanic* state, or *jhana*. Later, he moved on to another teacher, Udaka Ramaputta in Rajagrha in the kingdom of Magadha. Once again, he achieved high levels of meditative consciousness. When he entered the state of *jhana*, all suffering melt away, but as soon as his mind returned to the state of ordinary consciousness, greed and ignorance still afflicted him. Both the teachers asked him to join them as an equal, take their place to teach their students together, but he declined their offer and moved on.

Gautama now chose a path of extreme austerities. He has eaten very little and fasted until he could barely breathe. He severely punished his own flesh through harsh body mortifications and self-infliction of pain. He was so emaciated that people thought he was dead.

The practitioners of asceticism in Gautama's

time believed self-inflicted physical hardships would burn away the karmic substance that causes the constant reincarnation of human souls, so the practice of self-mortifications was designed to enable the practitioners to break free from the endless cycle of life and death. However, after six years, he decided against the extreme self-denial, finding that it would only lead to the unnecessary torturing of the body without bringing any mental benefits. Once he realized harsh ascetic measures did not work, he turned his back against them without hesitation.

5) Sitting down under the Bodhi tree

Gautama strolled down to Neranjara River and bathed to wash away the signs of abuse his body endured at his own hands. He also accepted milk and rice pudding from a village girl named Sujata. His break with asceticism led his five companions to abandon him and departed for Mrgadava (Deer Park) in Varanasi, since they believed that he had given up.

Left alone, Gautama found a Bodhi tree standing nearby. He laid down a grass woven mat donated by the merchants passing by and sat down there to meditate with the determination not to get up until full awakening was reached.

Some sutras refer to Gautama Siddhartha as a bodhisattva at this stage in recognition of his potential, who was predestined at this point to attain fully enlightened wisdom.

Sitting in meditation under the Bodhi tree, Gautama was on the cusp of becoming a

Buddha, a fully liberated being. Realizing this, the *maras*, led by the demon lord Papiyas, mobilized fearsome demon armies and rushed to disrupt him. Since *maras* thrive off people's greed, obsession, jealousy, delusions, and other unwholesome emotions that are responsible for trapping people in the endless cycle of life and rebirth, their livelihood was at risk. The demon lord threatened and seduced Gautama by turn, but he was unshakable.

At last, Paiyas challenged him.

"One must accumulate incalculable amount of merits to be entitled to a full awakening. Who can speak for you to prove that you already achieve enough good karma?"

Gautama simply reached out his right hand to touch the earth. The earth tremored and shouted,

"I bear him witness!"

Terrified, the demon lord and the hoard of *maras* scattered. In the ensuing silence, Gautama the Bodhisattva went deeper into *jhana*. This act of invoking the earth to bear witness to his rightful claim of the site as the predestined seat of his enlightenment and expel the *maras* is captured in the *Bhumisparsa mudra*.



6) Awakening

Now the persistent army of *maras* was finally defeated. With the whole world in slumber in the dead of night, Gautama the Bodhisattva was absorbed in a deep meditative state contemplating on the question of what is life and death, and whether nirvana, a full liberation from mundane existence, is possible. As the morning star rose in the sky, Gautama the Bodhisattva realized enlightenment. He was no longer bound by the samsaric existence of birth, old age, sickness and death, no longer confined to the prison of suffering and tears. Having transcended death, he became a Buddha, a fully Awakened Being.

Life and death is now beyond Buddha. He was completely liberated, his enlightenment unsurpassed and supreme. It was the year he turned thirty-five, on the eighth day of the twelfth months in the lunar calendar. This day is universally celebrated as holy by all Buddhists, as the day Buddhism as a religion was first born.

At the time of his enlightenment, he gained complete insight into the cause of suffering, and the steps necessary to eliminate it. He now fully understood why sentient beings continue to be born, get old and die, and how we could set ourselves free from the anxiety and fear inherent in the samsaric existence. He stayed under the Bodhi tree in pure, untainted bliss.

7) Life as a teacher

Now he was Sakyamin Buddha. When Buddha thought about who should be his first disciples, his five former companions who had practiced asceticism together came to mind, so he journeyed to Deer Park in Varanasi, the present day Benares. The distance to Benares from Bodh Gaya, the site of his enlightenment, is far, covering similar miles between Seoul and Gumi, but Buddha travelled on foot.

Buddha warned these 5 monks against extreme devotion to the indulgence of sense-pleasures as well as self-mortification. He instead opted to follow a path of balance, known in Buddhism as the Middle Way. Buddha then taught them the "first sermon," the teaching on the Four Noble Truth about the suffering and the cause of suffering, and the Eightfold Path that leads to the cessation of the cause of suffering. Upon hearing Buddha's first sermon, all five ascetics achieved the state of arahant.

A few days later, a millionaire's son Yasa and his friends came to see Buddha, who gave them a Dharma discourse, and Yasa became an arahant too. They formed the first sangha, the company of Buddhist monks. Now the world saw the establishment of the Three Gems: Buddha, the enlightened teacher, Dharma, the teaching, and Sangha, the community of ordained Dharma practitioners.

When Buddha's community grows to around sixty awakened monks, he sent them out singly to preach with those words:

"Go your way, monks for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the benefit, the happiness of gods and men. But not two of you shall walk the same path. I myself will also go to Uruvela."

-*Samyutta-nikaya*, fascicle 39

At Deer Park in northern India, Buddha set in motion the Wheel of Dharma. For the remaining 45 years of his life, slowly but surely he traveled around teaching a diverse range of men and women, from nobles to servants, ascetics and householders. The sangha traveled as well, wandering over the length and width of the subcontinent expounding Dharma. Some indeed shrugged off the whole mental of human suffering once and for all; others remained in the world as householders doing their best to accumulate wholesome karma and do good deeds. The sweet nectar of wisdom and compassion rained down on the world, and people started opening their eyes one by one.



8) Parinirvana

As he traveled through India in bare foot, people heaped praises and worship at his feet wherever he went. But in his later years, Buddha also suffered several troubling events. His home clan Sakya fell, with all his kinfolks exterminated; he survived the death of Sariputta and Moggallana, this two chief disciples, and; Devadatta's schism. Buddha's cousin Devadatta attempted to take over leadership of the order, and when he failed, he left the sangha with several Buddhist monks and formed a rival sect. And there were always people who defamed and insulted him with outrageous accusations. But Buddha was never swayed by any of these. Admiration did not elate him, nor the slander deflated him; his generosity and compassion was infinite, extending this teaching to everyone, but he never lost equanimity in the face of people's suffering.

Now at his eighties, Buddha went on his last teaching tour. His last days as he slowly journeyed to Kushinagar, still expounding Dharma to the people he met in the way, are recorded in touching details by the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*.

Buddha never stopped being a teacher to his students until his very last breath, showing concerns about the future welfare of his disciples and telling them what to be upheld for the sangha to prosper.

“Ananda, I am now old, worn out... I have reached the term of life, I am turning eighty years of age. Just as an old cart is made to go by being held together with straps, so the Tathagata's body is kept going by being bandaged up... Therefore, Ananda, you should live as islands unto yourselves, being your own refuge, seeking no other refuge; with the Dharma as an island, with the Dharma as your refuge, seeking no other refuge”.

- The *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*

The *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* also recorded Buddha's last words.

“Be a light unto yourself; betake yourselves to no external refuge.
Hold fast to the Truth. Look not for refuge to anyone besides yourselves.”

Human life is impermanent, mired in greed, anger and ignorance. Still, Buddha repeatedly emphasized to cherish it, as it is this imperfect human life that is also the impetus that propels us toward the enlightenment and drives us to strive to achieve it. It is worth reflecting upon his last words, that his final instruction to his students before his death was to rely only on Dharma and oneself.

There is nothing lasting forever in this world. There is no exception, which means that even the body of a being that has attained unsurpassed supreme enlightenment would crumble to dust, returning to nothing, at the end. After he took his last meal received as an offering from a blacksmith named Cunda, he went to a quiet grove in Kushinagar, and when he reached two Sala trees, he lied down underneath them on his right side, with his head pointing north.

“All that have arisen and taken forms decay. Strive for the goal with diligence.” With this as his final teaching to the disciples, Buddha entered a deep *jhana* meditation and died, reaching what is known as parinirvana, the final nirvana, the end of rebirth and suffering achieved after the death of the body. Sala trees suddenly burst in bloom, raining down on his body fragrant flower petals. The great philosopher, meditator, spiritual teacher, and religious leader who lived his whole life on the road traveling in bare foot to teach people the path toward the true liberation took his last breath on the road too. It was the fifteenth day of the second month in the lunar calendar, still celebrated as the Parinirvana Day by the Buddhists.



President of the Jogye Order Asking for Assistance for the Exhibition of the Fasting Buddha Statue in Korea



Most Ven. Wonhaeng is talking with H.E. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, the Pakistani Ambassador to Seoul when she visited the Korean Buddhist History and Culture Museum on May 19, 2020.

Most Venerable Wonhaeng, the president of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism asked for the Pakistani Embassy's cooperation to hold a special exhibition of Pakistani artifacts in Korea, including the Fasting Buddha Statue, considered one of the greatest masterpieces of Gandhara art when H.E. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, the Pakistani Ambassador to Seoul visited the Korean Buddhist History and Culture Museum on May 19, 2020.

Most Ven. Wonhaeng, who paid a state visit to Pakistan last year, congratulated Madame Baloch upon her appointment as the new Pakistani ambassador to Seoul and said, "Let's work together so that the special connection between Korea and Pakistan will grow into even greater friendship." He mentioned the fact Master Maranatha, who traveled

through China to reach Korea in 384 and introduced Buddhism to Korean people, was originally born in Pakistan, and said, "Our two countries have enjoyed close historic relationship for a long time, but it was reinforced even further because of the state visit last year." He continued by saying, "we would need Pakistani Embassy's cooperation in facilitating the special exhibition of Pakistani art in Korea, especially the Fasting Buddha Statue currently housed in Lahore Museum so that the Korean public, including its Buddhist population will be able to enjoy a wide range of relics found all over Pakistan."

Ambassador Baloch replied, "The Fasting Statue is a truly amazing masterpiece, and I hope the whole world as well as Koreans will have a chance to see it with their own eyes. As Most Ven. Wonhaeng, the President of the Jogye Order pointed out, I will do my best to give the world this special opportunity, which I am sure will also help strengthen the relations between Pakistan and Korea."

Most Ven. Wonhaeng was officially invited to visit Pakistan in November last year, when he toured major Buddhist and Gandhara sites including Lahore Museum and Master Maranatha's home town and had meetings with high ranking government officials such as President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan. During these unofficial meetings, Most Ven. Wonhaeng had lively discussions with them on how to excavate, develop and preserve Buddhist cultural assets, sites and artifacts in Pakistan.

Source: Buddhist Daily (<http://www.ibulgyo.com>)



Haein-sa Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the Korean War

Monastics pray for the 1.38 million war dead be reborn in the Western Paradise.

The year 2020 marks the 70th anniversary of the Korean War. On June 7 at Haein-sa Temple, the heartrending sound of monks' chanting echoed through the slope of Mt. Gaya, as the Grand Water and Land Ceremony was performed at Haein-sa Temple (abbot: Ven. Heuneugn) for the first time to appease the spirits of the Korean War dead and lead them to heavens.

Included among the 1.38 million Korean War dead are: 141,000 from the Korean military and police, 38,000 from allied forces of 16 nations sent by the United Nation such as the US, Turkey, France, the Netherland, Columbia and Thailand, 520,000 from the North Korean army, 149,000 from the People's Republic of China army as well as 520,000 civilian casualties.

All the victims of the war, whether they were once considered friends or foes, were summoned to the ancient hillsides of Mt. Gaya amid the majestic beat of Dharma drums and the exalting peal of Brahma bell. With 100,000 lanterns in five colors and the national flags of allied forces fluttering in the wind, the gathered crowd prayed for the spirits' rebirth in the Western Paradise and the lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. Before the ceremony started, incense and flowers were offered to the victims of the Korean war on the stage installed in front of the Virocana Hall, the main Dharma hall of Haein-sa. Most Ven. Wongak, the senior-most teacher of the Haein-sa lineage, Most Ven. Semin, the Chairman of the Elder's Council, Most Ven.



Rituals to appease the dead and lead them to heavens

Wonhaeng, the president of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, Ven. Musang, the head of the Jogye Order Tribunals and Ven. Jinwoo, the head of the Education Bureau were joined by the ambassadors to Korea from Turkey, France, the Netherland, Columbia and Thailand in administrating the ritual on the dais where memorial tablets were placed.

Then, the piercing note of the trumpet heralded the commencement of the Grand Water and Land Ceremony under the clear blue sky. As Most Venerables Seonryeong, Gyeongseong, and Gyeongam, all renowned Buddhist practitioners and scholars from Haein-sa bore witness, the solemn ritual of cleansing the spirits of the dead was conducted.

The next step of the ceremony was to call the spirits from each country to the stage to be present among the living. The monastics officiated the ceremony designed to relieve those who met the violent death of their pain and despair. Their hallowing chanting voices reverberated through the space, never giving up until the last soul would find peace and head toward the light of the Western Paradise riding on the power of Buddha-dharma.

Most Ven. Wongak, the senior-most teacher of the Haein-sa lineage said in his Dharma talk to commemorate the Water and Land Ceremony, "The UN, South Korean, North Korean and Chinese soldiers fought the crisscrossing over the 38 parallel until 1.38 million people lost their lives. Their hatred of each other reached as high as the sky, and the mountains and rivers of this land

all wept bitter tears over the tragic death of so many people. To heal the wounds still pestering after 70 years, to relieve the Korean people of the collective hatred and anger still lingering in our mind, we host today's ceremony at Haein-sa."

He continued by saying, "The tablets of the dead,

whether they were friends or foes, civilians or soldiers, are all now placed together. It also does not matter which country they came from. The 100,000 lanterns are lighted for all of them in equal goodwill. These lanterns will stay alight for hundred days to not only in this land but in all heavens above and hell realms below, keeping the prayers vivid for world peace and happiness for all beings.”

Most Ven. Wongak concluded his Dharma talk by dedicating the merits from the Water and Land Ceremony, wishing the blessings of the Buddha to visit “the spirits of the war dead, so that they could find in them the strength to forgive their enemies and be free from their suffering, and all Koreans from the South and the North so that they can co-exist in harmony and work together toward world peace.” He also wished the swift end of the coronavirus epidemic so that our lives can return to normal.



Most Ven. Wonhaeng, the president of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism offers incense at the ceremony.

Most Ven. Wonhaeng said as he paid tribute to the war dead, “By today’s Water and Land Ceremony, the Korean Buddhism is ushering in a new era of happiness for all beings by exorcising the deep grief and suffering still plaguing the Korean people’s mind. The four-fold community gathered today for the ceremony all aspire to lead the spirits who lost their lives in the most tragic ways in the Korean war to nirvana and light the lantern of compassion and wisdom to realize the truth of ‘the whole world in the single flower.’”

Most Ven. Wonhaeng said, “The merits from today’s

ceremony will be boundless. I dedicate all of them to the peaceful future on the Korean peninsula and the propagation of Buddha-dharma until it fills all Dharma realms in ten directions.” He ended his address by thanking Most Ven. Wongak and Ven. Hyeoneung, who is the abbot of Haein-sa Temple, for hosting the Water and Land ceremony.

The foreign ambassadors who attended this sacred ceremony also expressed their ardent wish that it would serve as a catalyst for achieving a permanent peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula.



H.E. Ersin Ercin, the Turkish Ambassador to Seoul

H.E. Ersin Ercin, the Turkish Ambassador to Seoul said in his memorial message, “The Turkish soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of Turkey’s ally will rest in eternal peace side

by side with its Korean brothers. The friendship between Turkey and Korea is forged in blood spilled to defend Korean people’s liberty, and it will only grow stronger.”

H.E. Philippe Lefort, the French Ambassador in Korea said, “It is a great honor to be invited to this Grand Water and Land Ceremony in Haein-sa



H.E. Philippe Lefort, the French Ambassador in Korea

Temple and be part of the holy aspiration for harmonious co-existence, reconciliation and peace.”

H.E. Juan Pablo Rodríguez Barragán, the Colombian Ambassador to Seoul said, “On behalf of the Republic of Colombia, I promise that I will never forget the heartfelt and sincere mutual respect and compassion I have witnessed today. Today’s Grand Water and Land

ceremony has a special meaning to me.”

H.E. Joanne Doornewaard, the Dutch Ambassador in Korea also said, “Today’s ritual is not only a memorial service for the deceased, but also an encouraging message to the living who dedicate their lives to make the world a better place.”



H.E. Juan Pablo Rodríguez Barragán, the Colombian Ambassador to Seoul



H.E. Joanne Doornewaard, the Dutch Ambassador in Korea

H.E. Singtong Lapisatepun, Ambassador of Thailand to the Republic of Korea, delivered a message congratulating the occasion saying, “I’m certain that the ceremony will serve as an opportunity to reinforce the Buddhists’ resolve to defend the world peace and create a more prosperous world.”



Ms. Qu Huan, the Chairperson of the Korea-China Culture and Goodwill Association

Ms. Qu Huan, the Chairperson of the Korea-China Culture and Goodwill Association spoke in fluent and clear Korean and received a big round of applaud,

saying, “I would like to offer sincerest admiration and gratitude to Most Ven. Hyeoneung of Haein-sa Temple for hosting and officiating the Grand Water and Land Ceremony out of warm-hearted compassion.”

Korean politicians and high-ranking officials from the invited guests also expressed appreciation for the role the Buddhist community played in helping the government handling the coronavirus related quarantine measures,

especially enforcing the policy of social distancing.

Mr. Gyeongsu Kim, Governor of Gyeongnam Province said in his congratulatory remark, “I wholeheartedly thank the Korean Buddhist community for doing everything it can to help the nation to overcome the COVID-19 crisis, including shutting down the temples, postponing the Buddha’s Birthday ceremonies and donating the emergency disaster fund to the government. I also thank you for praying for your efforts to improve the relationship with North Korea by holding this Grand Water and Land Ceremony in memory of 1.38 million war dead.”



Ven. Gyeongam performs the ritual of cremating the memorial tablets.

The head of Hapcheon County Junhee Mun, and the members of the National Assembly Ms. Seonmi Jin and Heeyong Jeong also promised that they would uphold the spirit of harmony and peace so that there would never be another war.

Source: Buddhist Daily (<http://www.ibulgyo.com>)



Memorial music, performed by Bongjeon Traditional Music Orchestra

Buddhist Way of Handling COVID-19

In this article, we introduce how the Korean Buddhist temples in foreign countries are handling the coronavirus scare from the Buddhist perspective while propagating Buddha-Dharma and Korean Buddhism. They are all using the deadly epidemic as an opportunity to further their spiritual practice and send the prayers and goodwill to the people who struggle with the illness.

Bohyun-sa Temple in Dallas, US (abbot: Ven. Jiam)



▲ Ven. Jiam cleaning and decorating Bohyun-sa Temple in October
▼ Monastics cleaning and decorating Bohyun-sa Temple in October

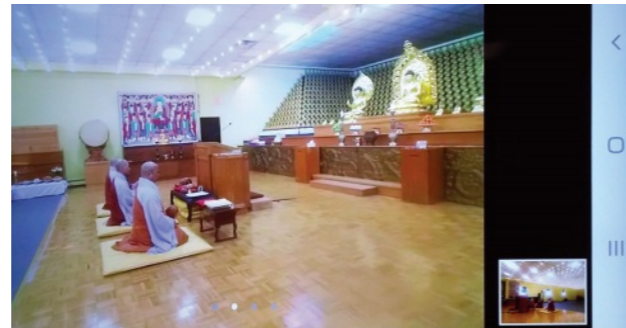
Bohyun-sa decided to halt all official gatherings including Dharma assemblies until this unprecedented plague dies down. However, the doors are always open for those who come for private prayer sessions, meditation or counseling as long as the basic rules for hygiene are observed.

Even though the face-to-face meetings are curtailed due to COVID-19, the Dharma talks and news about Bohyun-sa community will continue to be shared on the temple's homepage (www.dallasbohyunsa.com), Facebook page (Dallas Bohyunsa) and Kakaotalk group chatroom. Bohyun-sa will step up its effort to go on line so that its community members will have easy access to Buddha-dharma and stay in touch and communicate better with each other.

The abbot Venerable Jiam assured that Bohyun-sa Temple will continue to share teachings, cultivate practice and develop wisdom and compassion by using the sounds and images through social media platforms.



Wonkak-sa Temple in New York, US. (abbot: Ven. Jigwang)



▲ Ven. Jigwang is giving a Dharma Talk on YouTube.
▼ Ancestral rite broadcast on Zoom

Wonkak-sa Temple in New York livestreamed Dharma assemblies on-line, first on April 2 and then on April 12, the former the first Buddhist ancestral rite out of a series of seven services held in memory of a deceased community member, and the latter regular Sunday Dharma assembly. The ancestral rite on April 2 in particular has drawn much attention as it was broadcast to four different regions in the US including California.

The whole world is on hold because of COVID-19 pandemic. All social activities, including religious ones were put on halt. Wonkak-sa Temple is no exception, and it has announced that the temple would stop its public Dharma services from the 3rd week of March to make sure its congregation would fully join the social distancing campaign with the rest of the society.

Even before the coronavirus epidemic, Ven. Jigwang opened a group chatroom and was posting there short video clips and pictures of Dharma services and teachings whenever a Dharma assembly was held for those who could not make it to the temple. As the crisis dragged on, the temple decided to livestream the Sunday Dharma assembly on April 12 on the Facebook. The broadcast was interrupted a couple times due to the unstable Internet connection, but overall, it was a success with no major issue.

On April 2, a Buddhist ancestral rite was broadcast live on Zoom from Wonkak-sa Temple. The bereaved family members, who could not travel to the temple for the first memorial service they held for the deceased, originally planned to join on video call, but as the relatives living afar also wished to participate in the rite, they switched to Zoom. Two cameras were installed in the Dharma hall for the occasion, connecting four different regions with New York, where the ancestral rite was performed for the first time ever in front of livestreaming cameras.

Ven. Jigwang said, "COVID-19 has frozen almost everything in its track, but its message is very clear. It is reminding us of the Buddha's teaching that all beings are interdependently arising from each other,

and all live beings and I are not different. It is strongly urging us to reflect upon ourselves how much we are aware of this crucial truth." He continued to say, "I hope the livestreaming of Dharma services will be an opportunity to meet even more people, not only Buddhists but everyone else who is interested in learning more about the Buddha-Dharma."



LA Dalma-sa Temple, US (abbot: Ven. Geunseon)



▲ Lotus lanterns that monastics and laity made together to celebrate the Buddha's Birthday, despite the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus epidemic
◀ 49-day Lotus Sutra Recitation ceremony to pray for the end of COVID-19

As the California State declared the state of emergency amid the COVID-19 pandemic, LA Dalma-sa Temple also stopped the Sunday Dharma assembly from March 15. However, individuals are still welcome to visit the temple for personal prayer and meditation sessions.

To help the world overcome the difficult times, Dalma-sa started the Lotus Sutra recitation ceremony from April 5, which would last unbroken for 49 days until May 23.

The entire humanity is suffering from anxiety and fear of this new deadly strain of virus. Amid all

these confusion and worries, it would be immensely meaningful for all Buddhists to revisit the core teachings of the Sakyamuni Buddha, especially the Four Noble truth.

From the ancient times, Koreans have always found strength to overcome the national crisis by devotedly taking refuting in and ardently praying to the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. LA Dalma-sa hopes the 49-day *Lotus Sutra* recitation ceremony will help all Buddhist practitioners to beat the epidemic with the Buddha's courage and wisdom, carrying all sentient beings with them through difficult times.

Junghye-sa Temple in Orange County, US
(abbot: Ven. Seokta)



▲ Ven. Seokta giving a Dharma Talk on YouTube
▼ Live-streaming the Dharma Assembly on Sundays

Orange County Junghye-sa is now facilitating the meetings between the monastics and the members of the temple community via its YouTube channel

(US Junghyesa Buddhist TV) in compliance with the California State's decision to impose travel ban and close businesses.

People can come into contact with the Dharma teachings every Sunday in the cyberspace and still be moved by the Buddha's wisdom. However, everyone misses the face-to-face Dharma assembly on Sundays where the community can mingle in the family like atmosphere, and is ardently praying they will be reinstated soon.



Chogyesa Zen Temple of New York
(abbot: Ven. Doam)



▲ At 7pm every day, people shout and clap through the open windows to cheer and encourage each other.
▼ Ven. Cheongho in front of Chogyesa Zen temple chanting and sounding *moktak*

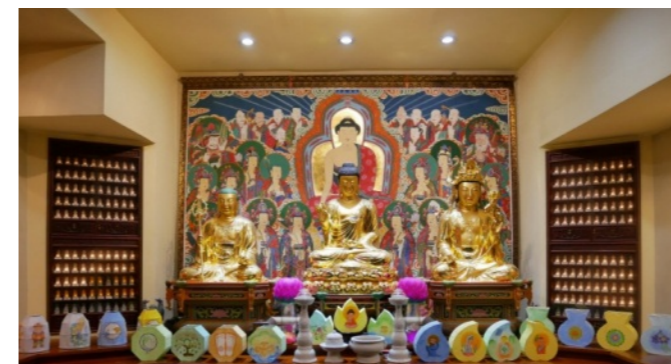
Venerable Cheongho residing at Chogyesa Zen Temple of New York in Manhattan now has a new daily ritual he would not miss. At 7pm every day, he would go out to the street in front of the temple at 96th St.

and sound *moktak*, a hand-held wooden gong used for Buddhist chanting, to join New York citizen's '7pm Clapping.' With the city under lock-down to fight the coronavirus pandemic, people of New York city open their windows at 7pm every day and cheer, yell, sing and clap to applaud the essential workers such as medical professionals, firefighters and policemen

Now, when the clear sound of Korean *moktak* reverberates across the Manhattan streets, signaling the beginning of the day's 7pm Clapping, the windows of the nearby apartment buildings open up and people start shouting and clapping. It lasts only two minutes each evening, but it still boosts people up to have courage and hope to go through the ordeal and live another day.



Goryeo-sa Temple in Argentina
(abbot: Ven. Suwon)



▲ Offering the lanterns to the Buddha, dedicating the merits to the well-being and health of all sentient beings

◀ Ven. Suwon overcoming COVID-19 crisis by making traditional lanterns

I finally launched the project which I had not even dared to start. There was no Dharma assembly to host, and no community members visiting the temple, so I spread everything all over the floor in the Dharma hall and worked on them day and night. I spent a whole day pouring time and energy on building the frames. Next day, I cut the paper and put them to the frames. Finally, twenty-four lanterns in the shapes of the wooden fish, Bodhi tree, lotus flower, fortune pouch, brahma bell and whatnot were completed one by one. The next step was to paint them. But some of them were too complex in shape to put paint directly on the lanterns. Instead, the drawings were applied on separate pieces of paper and the paper cutouts are later glued to the lanterns.

After full twenty days of toil, the lanterns to celebrate the Buddha's birthday were all finished, with the last one depicting the scenes from Ten Ox-herding Pictures.

The whole world is still suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic. I was able to accomplish the task of building the lanterns thanks to the extra time made possible by this new strain of coronavirus. I am dedicating all the merits I gained from creating these lanterns to all sentient beings, hoping they would bring light, peace and health to the world and beyond.



Jingak-sa Temple in Brazil
(abbot: Ven. Bojang)



Dharma Talk for the last year's Buddha's Birthday by Ven. Bojang. The celebration this year was cancelled due to coronavirus epidemic.



Pictures of the Buddha's Birthday celebrations from the past found in the photo album.

"I take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. I pray Buddha's blessings be with you, so that all your family be healthy and prosperous." Thus start all official communications with the temple community members.

The policy of social distancing has been in place for quite a while. But Jingak-sa is confident that all the members of the Temple are fully engaged in meditation and prayers that can transform fear and worries into hope and peace. Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the community couldn't celebrate the Buddha's birthday together, but despite the limiting circumstances, Venerables Bojang and Beopjeon would do their best to have a splendid ceremony on April 30.

Further, the temple edited the pictures from the Buddha's birthday celebration ceremonies for the past six years to make a video which is filled with gratitude and praise for the light of Sakyamuni Buddha who came to us 2,600 years ago, and sent it to the congregation. In the video, Venerable Bojang sent greetings, wishing that reflecting on the joyful memories of the past Buddha's birthday celebrations would help everyone overcome the hardship and stay healthy until the day they can meet again.

Lotus World Children Center in Cambodia (Head: Ven. Seonmun)



- ▲ Ven. Seonmun meditating with the students, wishing the life would go back to normal
- ▼ Vegetables planted by the students to minimize the exposure to the outside world

The Lotus World Children Center in Cambodia closed its doors voluntarily and is keeping to ourselves to overcome the crisis started by the COVID-19.

Venerable Seonmun starts the day by waking up the children at 5:30 am. Then, everyone goes on a run together on the 2 km long foot trail in the Center. In the morning, children do their homework, although they can no longer go to the school, and in the afternoon, they take classes on Korean, English, Yoga and modern dance. We also grow our own vegetables on the Center's ground. The food prices have risen due to the coronavirus epidemic, and it also helps to minimize contact with the outside world, therefore reducing the risk of exposure to the harmful virus.

Children also learn how to pray and meditate, in order to bring peace to their mind and wish the swift ending of the current crisis.

