



THE TRUE MEANING OF TAKING REFUGE

By Venerable Hsuan Hua



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Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma

The True Meaning of Taking Refuge

English translation by the
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A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and reputation.

A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.

A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.

A volunteer must not establish him/herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.

A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/her own mind.

A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.

A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/her translations.

A volunteer must endeavor to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

An Introduction to The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (DRBA), was founded by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua in the United States of America in 1959. Taking the Dharma Realm as its scope and the propagation of the genuine teachings of the Buddha throughout the world as its goal, the Association is dedicated to translating the Buddhist canon, propagating the Orthodox Dharma, and promoting ethical education for the benefit and happiness of all beings.

The members of the association strive to follow the Six Guidelines established by the Venerable Master, which are: no fighting, no greed, no seeking, no selfishness, no pursuing personal advantage, and no lying. Furthermore, they follow the Three Great Principles:

Freezing, we do not scheme.

Starving, we do not beg.

Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.

According with conditions,

we do not change.

Not changing, we accord with conditions.

We adhere firmly to our three

great principles.

*We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's
work*

*We take responsibility to mold our
own destinies.*

*We rectify our lives to fulfill the
Sangha's role.*

*Encountering specific matters,
we understand the principles.*

*Understanding the principles,
we apply them in specific matters.
We carry on the single pulse of
the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.*

Over the years the Association has founded various international spiritual communities, such as Gold Mountain Monastery, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, and the City of the Dharma Realm. Sangha members at these places are required to uphold the Buddha's regulations of eating only one meal a day before noon and wearing their precept-sash at all times. They observe the precepts, recite the Buddha's name, study the teachings, and practice meditation, dwelling in harmony and dedicating their lives to Buddhism. The Association has established the International Translation Institute, the Sangha and Laity Training Programs, Dharma Realm Buddhist University, elementary and high schools, and other programs to promote education and the translation of the Buddhist canon.

The Association's branch organizations are open to those of all faiths and nationalities. Any person who wishes to devote himself or herself to kindness, virtue, and truth, who wishes to understand his or her own mind and inherent nature, is welcome to study and cultivate in these communities.

Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

The Venerable Master Hua was also known as An Tse and To Lun. The name Hsuan Hua was bestowed upon him after he received the transmission of the Wei Yang Lineage of the Chan School from Venerable Elder Master Hsu Yun. He was born in Manchuria at the end of the Qing dynasty and left the home-life at the age of nineteen. He lived in a tiny hut by his mother's graveside for three years, as an act of filial respect. During that time, he meditated and studied the teachings. Among his many practices of purity were eating only one meal a day before noon and never lying down to sleep. He traveled widely to study and draw near Elder Masters of great virtue, in particular Elder Master Hsu Yun.

In 1948 the Master arrives in Hong Kong, where he founded the Buddhist Lecture Hall and other monasteries. In 1962 he brought the proper Dharma to America and the West, where he lectured extensively on the major works of the Mahayana Buddhist canon and delivered over ten thousand speeches on the Dharma. He was a pioneer in establishing the Triple Jewel in America.

Over the years, the Master founded the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and its various branch organizations. He taught Eastern and Western students to practice Buddhism in daily life and trained disciples to translate the Buddhist canon and establish schools. Under his guidance, the monastic communities of the Association have become a Sangha that genuinely practices the Buddhist teachings. On June 7, 1995, the Master entered the stillness in Los Angeles, U.S.A., and the world mourned the setting of the sun of wisdom. Although he manifested entry into stillness, the example that he set will continue to live. Throughout his life he worked selflessly, teaching with wisdom and compassion and inspiring many people to correct their faults and walk upon the pure and noble path to enlightenment.

Verse for Opening a Sutra

The unsurpassed, profound,
and wonderful Dharma,

In hundreds of millions of aeons,
is difficult to encounter,

I now see and hear it,
receive and uphold it,

And I vow to fathom the
Tathagata's true meanings.

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The Greatest Thing in Life- Taking Refuge with the Triple Jewel

- A talk by the Venerable Master
Hsuan Hua on March 28, 1993,
at Long Beach Monastery

The greatest thing in life is to take refuge with the Triple Jewel. You have to be serious about this. Don't treat it casually, and don't act on a whim. First of all, you have to choose a teacher of genuine understanding and wisdom to take refuge with. That way, when there is some principle you do not understand, you will receive the proper guidance that will allow you to gain insight into the Buddha's knowledge and views. Don't join "external sects" [sects that seek truth outside the mind] or listen to the instructions of misguided teachers.

It is not only now that external sects and misguided teachers have become so popular. — They were also very numerous when the Buddha was in the world. At that time, there were ninety-six external sects and seventy-two cults. These flourished even more than the Proper Dharma. People joined these cults simply because they did not understand the truth. Such cults are very harmful, for they can easily lead you astray. You start out hoping to gain some benefit, but once you go astray, you will only be harmed. It is very dangerous.

If you want to take refuge with the Triple Jewel and enter the Treasury of the Proper Dharma Vision and the Wonderful Mind of Nirvana, you must look for wise teachers. However, even among left-home people, the wise and the unwise are intermingled; they are not all the same. If you make the mistake of joining an external sect, you will suffer great harm; and if you mistakenly follow the teachings of a misguided teacher, the harm is even greater.

Therefore, all of you who are studying the Buddha Dharma don't let it happen that you seek to ascend but end up falling into the hells instead. Don't let it be that you want to find happiness, but suffer boundless misery instead. That's why I said that taking refuge is a matter of the highest priority; nothing is more important. When you take refuge with me, you have to consider everything clearly and recognize the path you're taking.

Each of you should bring forth the utmost sincerity in repenting of your past offenses before the Buddhas. If you are really sincere in repenting, then your offenses will be

eradicated, and your good roots will grow. But if you are not sincere, your offenses will still remain, and your good roots will not grow. So, it all depends on your sincerity and concentration. Do not let your mind get distracted; avoid deluded thoughts; and restrain your wild mind. You have to be true and sincere when taking refuge. If you simply go through the motions, you will not get a response.

If your faith is solid and your conduct is pure, then from the time you formally take refuge until you become a Buddha, you will not run into any great difficulties. If your faith is weak and your conduct is impure, then you can forget about becoming a Buddha. You will have a hard time just being a person. Not only laypeople, but even left-home people will fall into the hells if they do not cultivate.

Therefore, all you laypeople should do your best and work hard. Do not be absent-minded and disrespectful toward Buddhism. You should revere the Triple Jewel,

make offerings to the Triple Jewel, believe in the Triple Jewel, and serve the Triple Jewel all your life. Then you will have a response in the Way. If you cannot do this after you take refuge, and you still act as if you had not taken refuge at all, then you will not have any responses.

Every morning when you get up, you should make the Four Vast Vows before the Buddhas. These are vows that every Bodhisattva should make. Make these vows in the morning, and in the evening ask yourself, "Living beings are limitless; have I saved them? I have vowed to cut off the endless afflictions. Have I cut them off? If not, I must cut them off. If I haven't saved living beings, then I must save them. And if I haven't gotten rid of my afflictions, I must cast them out. I have vowed to learn the boundless Dharma-doors. But have I learned them? No? Then I must do so. No matter how busy I am, I ought to devote time to reciting Sutras and reading Buddhist books in order to learn the boundless Dharma-doors. I have vowed to accomplish the unsurpassed Buddha Way, but I am

still an ordinary person, not a Buddha. I must hurry and cultivate in order to realize Buddhahood." You should contemplate in this way every day. In the morning make the Four Vast Vows, and in the evening reflect to see whether you have fulfilled them.

**A Turn of the Head Is the Other
Shore -
Taking Refuge with the Triple
Jewel**

- A talk by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua on January 17, 1993, at the Taipei County Stadium in Banqiao, Taiwan

"The sea of suffering is boundless; a turn of the head is the other shore." Taking refuge is the first step. Right at the first step you must go forward vigorously. Do not turn around and retreat. This is the way to Buddhahood. If you turn around and retreat, you will fall into the three paths of suffering and wander among the eight difficulties. Therefore, it is said,

*The Master brings you in the door,
But you your self must cultivate.*

*You yourself have to eat to get full;
You must put an end to your own birth
and death.*

Do not say, "I have taken refuge, so I can rely on the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha." Although the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha have awesome spiritual power, they cannot help you cultivate to realize Buddhahood. They cannot help you to fathom the Buddha Dharma or help you to understand the path of cultivation. It is the Sangha which must propagate the Dharma and make it known in the world.

Although you have now taken refuge with the Triple Jewel, you still have to work hard in order to make progress. If you can refrain from killing, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, telling lies, and taking intoxicants, then you have truly received the five precepts. If you continue to kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, lie, and take intoxicants, then you have not really received the five precepts.

If you fail to uphold the precepts after you receive them, your offenses are even more severe because you are fully aware that you are committing them. People who violate the precepts are destined to fall. You cannot say, "Oh, I've taken refuge with the Triple Jewel and received the five precepts, so I have protection. It doesn't matter if I kill, or steal, or commit sexual misconduct. It's all right for me to tell lies and take intoxicants."

Someone is protesting in his mind, "If the retribution for laypeople who receive and then violate the five precepts is so severe, what about left-home people who

violate the precepts? Wouldn't it be even worse for them?" You should have this attitude:

Mahasattvas do not pay attention to others.

Amitabha Buddha looks after himself.

You should watch over yourself all day long, being mindful in everything you do. Reflect upon yourself. Seek within yourself. Ask yourself every day, "Am I holding the precepts, or have I violated any of them? Since taking refuge with the Triple Jewel, have I been a true Buddhist, or have I gone over to Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or other religions? Do I study the teachings of external sects?" After you have taken refuge, your attitude should be: "Even if someone said he would kill me if I believed in the Buddha, but would let me live if I didn't, I would still refuse to believe in external sects."

External sects refer to the demons of the Heaven of Ease and to all the other demons from the heavens. The demons from the heavens possess spiritual powers. They can manifest endless transformations and make their spiritual powers function in

mysterious ways. They constantly show off their spiritual powers. Buddhist disciples, on the other hand, do not manifest their spiritual powers. If they possess such powers, they should not reveal them or talk about them. People who claim to have spiritual powers, such as the powers of the heavenly eye and the heavenly ear, can be considered as belonging to the retinue of demons discussed in the "Fifty Skandha-demon States" chapter of the Shurangama Sutra; or else they are followers of demons from the heavens, or followers of external sects.

Buddhists should possess Dharma-selecting Vision and not be greedy for easy rewards. If you are greedy in your quest for the Dharma, then you might study the manifest practice today because you hear it being praised, but then study the esoteric practice tomorrow because you hear that being praised. You may study for your whole life, but because you do not stick to your principles and concentrate on one thing, you end up wasting all your time.

Now that you have taken refuge, you should refrain from transgressing the five precepts. You should diligently practice according to the Three Refuges and strictly uphold the five precepts. The five precepts are the basis for attaining Buddhahood. Laypeople have five precepts, and left-home people have 250 precepts. Bhikshunis have 348 precepts.

Although these precepts are very detailed and numerous, you have to truly uphold them without transgressing any of them. Basically, precepts are rules for restricting and regulating our behavior. If you try your best to follow the rules and to avoid making mistakes, then you are upholding the precepts. On the other hand, if you receive the precepts but fail to keep them, you are still a common person.

The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha are very fair. Anyone who cultivates can attain the fruits of cultivation. However, if you don't cultivate, you won't attain anything. Therefore, all of you should be like

generals who don't even bother to dismount, but just keep going forward.

Let's see who will be the first to make it to Buddhahood or to the Land of Ultimate Bliss. The merit that you gain by holding the five precepts, or by leaving the home-life to cultivate the Way, can enable you to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Once you get there, don't just stay there and forget about living beings; you have to come back and save living beings. Therefore, you should bring forth a great resolve to attain Bodhi and save all living beings.

Some people say they would like to save living beings right away. if you have not even saved yourself yet, how can you save other living beings ? You are like a Bodhisattva made out of clay, who can barely save himself as he crosses the sea. You first have to save yourself. If you try to save living beings before you have saved yourself, you are simply renouncing the root to pursue the branch tips and overlooking what is near to seek that which is far away. If you help other

people plow their fields but neglect your own field, you are making a big mistake.

Therefore, everyone should work hard. Don't rely on your teacher and say, "My teacher has great wisdom." Even if your teacher has attained the Way, you still have to cultivate on your own. If you don't cultivate, then even if the Buddha appeared before you, it's not for sure that he could help you.

Those Who Take Refuge with the Triple Jewel Should Observe the Precepts

- A talk by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua on November 18, 1988, at the Buddhist Center in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

You have formally taken refuge with the Triple Jewel and the precepts today. Originally, people did not take refuge with the precepts when they took refuge with the Triple Jewel. However, since the Buddha has entered Nirvana, living beings should take the precepts as their teacher. That's why the Ceremony for Taking Refuge included taking refuge with the precepts. What are precepts? Precepts consist of doing no evil and practising all good. Do not neglect to do a good deed just because it is small, and don't do an evil deed it is slight.

Many Buddhists make the mistake of praising their religion when they are in it and denouncing it after they have left it. Some people are always going from one place to another, believing in one cult today the day after that. Believing in all these different cults, they end up falling into the hells before they know it. Since they don't have a definite principle, they go around hoping to find a bargain. Their craving for new and strange things leads them to study esoteric Dharmas or to join some bizarre, clandestine cult that wouldn't dare to show itself in the light of day. As a

result, they unwittingly become hungry ghosts, suffer in the hells, or fall into the animal realm to undergo their retributions. How pitiful!

During the refuge ceremony today, we first took refuge with the Buddhas. “Having taken refuge with the Buddha, I would rather give up my body and life ...” I’d rather give up this body and life than ever take refuge in external sects or with demons of the heavens, such as Ishvara, the demon of the Heaven of Ease. Ease refers to the happiness found in such places as the Kingdom of Heaven, or perhaps some earthly kingdom. You’ve never been to such places, but you are so intrigued by their names that you want to go without knowing exactly where you’re going. Thus, “Entering the belly of a horse and coming out of the womb of a mule, you pass by King Yama’s court several times. Having just gone by Lord Shakra’s palace, you return to King Yama’s pot again.” Transmigrating in the six paths is dangerous business. If you keep running around looking for advantages, you may end up getting reborn in the animal realm. Therefore, we

would rather give up our bodies and lives than take refuge with the demon Ishvara.

The demons of the heavens and the followers of external sects are forever bragging about how great they are. They always promote themselves. As the saying goes, "Old lady Wang sells melons; she sells and advertises them herself." These teachers also boast about how great they are, saying, "If you believe in my teaching, you can get enlightened instantly! You can become a Buddha in this very life. You can become a Buddha without having to follow precepts, be vegetarian, or stay away from the opposite sex!" They teach all sorts of Dharmas, such as the dharma which involves coupling between men and women. Confused by all these Dharmas, you think they're really wonderful and so you go around learning them. Running from one place to another, you end up straying down the wrong road, and it's not easy to turn back.

Therefore, we should not be greedy for advantages, ease, happiness, or enjoyment. Having taken refuge with the Triple Jewel, we should be content with our lot. We should live our lives peacefully, in accord with the decree of Heaven. We don't want to be opportunistic, take shortcuts, or flatter people. We should not take refuge with Ishvara, the demon of the Heaven of Ease. Rather, we should take refuge with the perfectly enlightened Tathagatha, that is, with the Buddha, who is greatly wise. The World Honored One, the Buddha, is the one whom we should honor and respect.

Having taken refuge with the Dharma, we would also rather give up our lives than take refuge with the books of external sects. The "books of external sects"* refers to the scriptures, doctrines, and books that followers of external sects publish and circulate. Not taking refuge with them means not reading them. If you don't even read them, how much the less would you take refuge with them? So you should not read the books of external sects. After you have taken refuge with the orthodox Dharma, you should not study the misguided doctrines found in the books of external sects.

Everyone should be aware of this. It should not be that after taking refuge with the Triple Jewel you are still so muddled that when you see a statue of the local guardian spirit, you bow to it; when you see a pile of cow manure, you bow to that too; and when you see some dog excrement, you bow to that as well. Such behavior is really pathetic. You should not read any of the books written or published by the external sects.

Taking refuge with the Sangha means taking refuge with the Sangha of worthies and sages throughout the ten directions, not with the followers of misguided cults. If you take refuge with those cults, you will fall into the hells together with them. So you should not take refuge with them. What kind of Sangha should you take refuge with? You should take refuge with the pure Sangha, which is like a field where people can plant blessings. Why should you take refuge with the Sangha? Because the Dharma is transmitted by the Sangha. If you take refuge with the Sangha, you have a chance to understand the Buddha Dharma, understanding the Buddha Dharma, you can become a Buddha.

Therefore, you should take refuge with the Sangha and not with the demons and external sects that propagate wrong knowledge and views. Don't listen to them talking about how fantastic they are, about how their eyes can emit light, how their noses can talk, and how their ears can eat. Only demons and freaks are like that. Why should a person's eyes emit light? Why should his nose talk? Why should his ears eat? How can such a person be anything but a demon or a freak? In fact, he cannot really do those things either. He just says he can in order to cheat people. Now that you have taken refuge with the Triple Jewel, you should have proper knowledge and views.

Don't cling to wrong knowledge and views.

What is meant by a pure Sangha that is like a field of blessings? Pure means being free from defilement.

Someone who is free from defilement will teach you not to fight, not to be greedy, not to seek things, not to be selfish, not to pursue personal benefit, and not to lie. A person who is able to hold the precept of not having money is truly a pure Sangha member who is a

field of blessings. Even if he had access to money, he would not want it.

Such a person doesn't know what money could be good for. If you give someone a little money and he is overjoyed, you ought to question his motives. If a person is always clear and unruffled whether or not he receives any offerings, if he does not flatter the rich or look down on the poor, then he is a pure Sangha member, who is like a field for planting blessings. You should distinguish clearly between the two. If you cannot recognize the difference, then you are still, and will always be, confused.

Next, we take refuge with the precepts. Taking refuge with the precepts means doing no evil and practicing all good. You should not even have the thought of evil in your mind.

"But bad thoughts often pop up in my mind." you say.
"What should I do?"

You can try to gradually reduce the bad thoughts and avoid getting carried away by them. Suppose the thought comes up, "Oh! I really want to kill that person." If your reaction is, "Okay, fine, I'll go kill him right away!" then you've been carried away by the thought. Suppose you think, "Oh! He has a diamond worth such-and-such an amount. It's a very rare gem. I'm going to figure out a way to steal it." That's an evil thought.

In general, if you do not have any bad thoughts, such as the thoughts that men and women have about each other, then your thoughts are proper. When a man and a woman daydream about each other, their thoughts are improper and unwholesome. Therefore, we should diligently cultivate morality, concentration, and wisdom and extinguish greed, anger, and stupidity. Again, the old saying, "Do not do an evil deed just because it is slight, and don't overlook a good deed just because it is small." To follow this principle is to take refuge with the precepts.

Having taken refuge with the precepts, over the course of time we will accumulate merit and (virtue, develop great wisdom, bring wisdom and blessings to perfection, and then realize Buddhahood and unsurpassed perfect enlightenment (anuitarasamyaksambodhi).

After attaining unsurpassed perfect enlightenment, we have to turn the ship of compassion around and come back to save all living beings. These are the basic conditions for people who take refuge with the Triple Jewel, and we should know them. Once we have taken refuge, we should not commit offenses, exploit situations for our advantage, or try to get a good deal out of Buddhism. If we did that, we would be making a great mistake! Do you understand? [Everyone: "Yes!"]

We should practice in accord with the Four Vast Vows. The first one is, "Living beings are boundless; I vow to save them all." We should think about it: Have we saved any living beings? If not, then have we saved ourselves? What does it mean to save ourselves? Have we been genuinely good Buddhists after taking refuge

with the Buddha, or have we just come to Buddhism for the sake of getting food and clothing? Have we used religion to cheat people out of their money? Are we trying to fool people in Buddhism? If we have been that way, then not only will we be unable to save living beings, we ourselves will fall into the hells. That's the first thing we should know. We should set a good example for living beings and influence them to resolve their minds on enlightenment. It doesn't matter if we can save only one living being. Bit by bit, over the course of time, we will be able to save two beings, three beings, four beings, five beings, and so on. That's how we should go about saving living beings.

The second vow we should make is, "Afflictions are endless; I vow to cut them off." Have my afflictions, my bad temper, my obstinate bovine temperament—or my canine or feline temperament, for that matter—been cut off? Is my disposition that of a human being or that of a beast? Do I understand the human temperament? Am I willing to cut off my afflictions? If not, then I have yet to fulfill the Four Vast Vows. Thus, the first thing we should do is cut off afflictions and

get rid of ignorance. Once we have done so, we will be true Buddhists. That's why we should not have any temper!

"Dharma doors are immeasurable; I vow to learn them all." Have I learned them? Or do I read pornographic novels every day? Am I spending all my time reading romance novels? Am I always reading novels that cause people to think about improper things? Have I studied the Sutras? We should know the answers to these questions. Are we wasting our valuable time doing meaningless things? We must learn the Dharma doors.

Why? Because we want to realize the unsurpassed Buddha Way.

"The Buddha Way is unsurpassed, I vow to realize it." Have we realized the Buddha Way yet? No. Well, do we want to? If so, we must bring forth a great Bodhi resolve and advance courageously and vigorously without even retreating. If we can do that, then the power (these Four Vast Vows will help us to maintain

our practice until we attain the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment of the Buddha. If you don't do that, then you are simply heading for a fall. Although you have taken refuge with the Triple Jewel, you haven't truly understood what the Triple Jewel is all about.

You Should Not Take Refuge Just to Join the Crowd

- A talk by the Venerable Master
Hsuan Hua on November 7,
1993, in Rochester, New York

Those who have taken refuge before should not take refuge again. Why not?

1. This is to avoid the situation in Buddhism where people compete for disciples and harbor bad feelings toward one another. Because they compete for profit, people get very resentful and antagonistic.

2. If the people who take refuge are all people who have taken refuge before. Buddhism will not have any new blood. Buddhists who go "temple-hopping" can hardly be considered disciples of the Buddha.

3. I don't even have enough virtue to be able to accept as disciples those beginners who are taking refuge with the Triple Jewel for the first time, how much the less those who have already taken refuge. However, if someone who has already taken refuge has permission from his original teacher, or if his teacher has passed away, disappeared, or returned to lay-life, then I will accept him.

Each of you must be a true Buddhist. Don't be muddled in your practice of Buddhism. What's the point of taking refuge with so many teachers, if you don't have real faith in any of them? Use your Dharma-Selecting Vision. Don't just follow along blindly. Buddhists should not look for bargains. They should take more losses and not act exclusively in their own interests. The world is getting worse and worse because people are only concerned about themselves. Driven by desire for profit, people are constantly at each other's throats.

The only thing I know how to do is to take losses. That's why I have never accepted any offerings for myself. However, if you want to make offerings to the temple or to the community, that's all right. I'm trying to support the community, not myself. As for myself, I could starve to death and it'd be fine. So I say,

Freezing, we do not scheme.

Starving, we do not beg.

Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.

According with conditions, we do not change.

Not changing, we accord with conditions.

We adhere firmly to our three great principles.

That's the first part of the verse. When we initially bought the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, people were so overwhelmed by the size of the place that they ran away, fearing that I would ask them for donations. But I never asked for help from anyone. When I work, I don't expect any reward, and I never ask for help.

I just go ahead and do the work.

The second part of the verse says,

We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's work;

We take responsibility to mold our own destinies.

We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sangha's role.

Encountering specific matters, we understand the principles.

Understanding the principles, we apply them in specific matters.

We carry on the single pulse of the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.

Without regard for our own lives, we are willing to

sweat and bleed for Buddhism, never taking a rest.
According to the philosophy of self-determination:

We create our own destinies.

And seek our own blessings.

Blessings and calamities are not fixed;

We incur them through our own actions.

"We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sangha's role." Left-home people should strictly follow the rules set down by the Buddha. For example, a left-home person is characterized by the fact that he wears a precept sash. If one does not wear the sash, one is in effect returning to lay-life. The Buddha also made the rule of eating one meal a day in the middle of the day. By limiting the amount of food and drink that we consume, we chase away the ghosts and corpses spirits and lessen desires. (Our bodies have three corpse spirits. If we overeat, these three corpse spirits act up.) With fewer desires, it is easier to cultivate the Way.

Therefore, we do not eat nutritious food. That's our way of doing things at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Although we aren't perfect, we hope each person will work hard to improve himself or herself.

Quickly Walking on the Path to Buddhahood

- A talk by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua on December 28, 1993, at the City of Dharma Realm

Today everyone's good roots and Bodhi shoots have sprouted. To take refuge with the Triple Jewel is to be born with your eyes open. Don't go down the wrong road. What is meant by being born with your eyes open? It means you start a new life with your eyes open. You must find the right path. You must recognize clearly: Why am I taking refuge? Why do I want to take refuge with the Triple Jewel? This is an important moment.

Don't let it be that you take refuge just because others are taking refuge, or that you bow to the Buddha just because others are bowing to the Buddha! Just what exactly is taking refuge with the Triple Jewel?

"I don't know!"

What is bowing to the Buddha all about?

"I don't know!"

You come to take refuge not knowing any of these things. Isn't that just blindly cultivating and blindly practicing? Isn't that just following blindly? You should open your eyes; recognize the road clearly; and go straight down the path courageously, without retreating.

Now is the Dharma-ending Age. What is meant by the end of the Dharma? It means the demise of the Buddha dharma. The Dharma is already coming to its end, and it will soon disappear entirely. The Buddha dharma is already in its autumn. The sun is about to set and the road ahead is already dim. There's not much hope. But it's right at this time that we must bring forth our vigor and courage to move forward and rush down the path so that we can reach our destination. This is the general meaning of taking refuge with the Triple Jewel.

Today there are many people with deep good roots who are taking refuge with the Triple Jewel. Some are transformation bodies of Bodhisattvas who have come to take refuge. Some are transformation bodies of

gods, dragons, and others in the eightfold division who have come to take refuge. Some are human beings who have come to take refuge. There are even ghosts and spirits who have come to take refuge. This is the first time that the Three Refuges have been transmitted at the City of the Dharma Realm. The Ceremony for Taking Refuge is particularly magnificent. The heavenly Dharma-protectors, the gods, dragons, and others of the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits are filling up the space around us. They have come to protect this Way-place. Whatever wishes any of you are making about the future will be completely known by these Dharma protectors and good spirits. Each of you should urge yourself on.

I have made a little vow, which is that whoever takes refuge with me or does not take refuge with me, whoever believes in the Buddha or believes in other religions, as long as they have not become Buddhas - I will wait for them to become Buddhas before I do.

You should go forward with courageous vigor and not be lazy. Don't steal off to take it easy. don't shirk toil and crave the soft life.

You must change your bad habits to good ones: change your faults and renew yourself. Go forward on the path to Bodhi with courage and vigor. Don't make me wait for all of you too long! If I have to wait too long, maybe I won't have the energy to keep waiting. Each of you should be like the general who never dismounts—just keep going forward.

~ THE END ~

Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtues accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands,
Repaying four kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.



The Dharma Protector Bodhisattva



Transference of Merit

*May the Merits and Virtues accrued from
this work,
Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands,
Repaying the Four Kinds of Kindness
above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths
below.*

*May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve of Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in Ultimate Bliss.*

