

No Work, No Meal

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Dharma Master Cheng Yen made three vows in the early years when she first became a Buddhist nun. The first was not to accept offering; the second was not to hold Buddhist Dharma services; the third was not to take disciples. What she wanted at that time was pure Dharma practices. Then she saw a poor aboriginal woman suffering from labor complications because she could not afford the medical deposit to see a doctor. The puddle of blood from the woman and the subsequent visit from three nuns inspired Master Cheng Yen to make a vow to establish the Buddhist Tzu Chi Merit Association to help the poor.

Because of Tzu Chi, she broke her vow and accepted disciples. However, she wanted her disciples to be involved in the community and help those in need rather than pursue their own happiness. To help the poor, the Jing Si Abode distributed relief goods to the poor, the ill, and the solitary elderly people. At the same time, Master Cheng Yen taught the Medicine Buddha Sutra, in the hope that all poor and ill people can be freed from suffering and achieve happiness.



From the day before the establishment of Tzu Chi Merit Association until today, people living in the Jing Si Abode have sustained themselves through their own efforts. All practitioners who live in the Abode need to do farm work and make handcrafts to earn their own living. This is the “No work, no meal” faith, which was passed down from the Zen Master Bai Chang of the Tang Dynasty.

The farm work and handcrafts, which have been continuously in production in the past forty years, include rice growing; infant shoes and cotton gloves making; clothes processing; wood board carving; gloves sewing; Chrysanthemum planting; pottery making; and the current stable source of income – making Job’s Tears Bean Powder, candles, etc., totaling more than twenty-one kinds of work. The living expenses of the residents in the Abode are clearly separated from the donations received from donors all over the world. All donations are remitted to the Tzu Chi Foundation to help the poor and the suffering people.



The Abode residents (Buddhist nuns) not only earn their own living but also provide locations, office necessities, and accommodations for the foundation colleagues. They themselves are also the practitioners and spiritual leaders of the Tzu Chi Four Main Missions: Charity, Medicine, Education, and Humanistic Culture. The Abode residents will continue their compassion vows and devote themselves to aiding all sentient beings.

Today, the Tzu Chi Jing Si Abode is the spiritual home for all Tzu Chi members. Tzu Chi

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volunteers all over the world return to this spiritual hometown annually to seek for advancement in spiritual cultivation as well as purification of the soul.

Source: Tzu Chi and the Buddhism for the Human Realm Practice by Rey-Sheng Her