

Celebrate Buddha Day, Mother's Day and Tzu Chi Day

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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The second Sunday of May is a very special day, as there are three meaningful occasions that fall on that day: Mother's Day, Buddha Day, and Tzu Chi Day. The second Sunday of May is Mother's Day in Taiwan. In 2000, it was designated by Taiwan's government as the official Buddha Day in Taiwan. In Tzu Chi, it became the official Global Tzu Chi Day following Tzu Chi's 30th anniversary. (Tzu Chi was founded on March 24, 1966 on the lunar calendar.)

For Tzu Chi, this day has many meanings: (1) promoting the field of reverence (敬); (2) promoting the field of gratitude (報); that is to be grateful to your parents and teachers and (3) promoting the field of compassion (悲) and that is to give of ourselves to help others. In helping others, we might seem to be the "giver", yet we must be grateful to those who receive our aid because others' suffering awakens us and makes us feel that we're very blessed. Only when people can feel they're blessed can they truly be happy and have a blessed life. Moreover, given that there is so much suffering in the world, we are truly fortunate to be someone who has the capacity to help. We are also fortunate because we have many people who share our ideals and unite with us to carry them out.

Mother's Day signifies "the field of gratitude" we are to cultivate. Buddha Day signifies "the field of reverence" we are to cultivate and Tzu Chi Day---the way the volunteers in Tzu Chi work united to offer their love and care---that signifies "the field of compassion". That is where we are to cultivate and nurture compassion. These three fields together form a great field for cultivating blessings and wisdom.



The reason for commemorating the Buddha's Birthday

As the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful True Law tells us, all Buddhas come into the mundane world for the sole purpose of leading living beings to attain the same Enlightenment as the Buddhas. Over 2,500 years ago, Sakyamuni Buddha was born into this world. After leaving royal life to pursue the path of spiritual cultivation, he finally awakened to the ultimate truth of the universe, becoming a Buddha, the Enlightened One. It is because of him that we are able to arrive at the understanding of life that we now have, gaining the capacity to recognize our suffering and see it for what it is, so that we are able to begin transforming our confused mind into the awakened mind. So, we must be grateful to the Buddha, and therefore, we commemorate the birth of Sakyamuni Buddha with a special ceremony.

The true meaning of the Buddha Day Ceremony

The Buddha's Enlightenment:

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The Buddha is the one who guides us to awaken our spiritual wisdom-life. He represents "the field of reverence" that we are to cultivate. We are ignorant of the direction of our lives, and we need a guide that can lead us so we would not go astray. The Buddha is this spiritual guide. We are as if adrift in a vast sea, and the Buddha is the compass that lets us know our direction and helps us to grow spiritually. The Buddha has unsurpassed wisdom and compassion, and being so, his views are very different from us ordinary beings. We are usually caught in mundane ways of thinking which throw our minds into confusion and chaos, and bring us suffering and misery. The Buddha, however, has awakened to the ultimate Truth, and is able to see things as they truly are. He then devoted the rest of his life sharing these truths with all, so that we the unenlightened can see through our delusions and transcend our afflictions to come out of suffering and likewise walk the same path as the Buddha to enlightenment. [Dharma Master Cheng Yen](#) stated that the Buddha's Birthday Ceremony is to remind us that over 2,500 years ago, there lived an enlightened being who came to teach us universal truths. He taught us to respect one another, be grateful for one another, and always have love for others. During the Buddha Day Ceremony, we should strive to understand the Buddha's heart, recognize our misguided views and beliefs, learn from the Buddha's example and strive to emulate his pure, enlightened love. When our love and compassion is wakened and our hearts fill with gratitude—that is a heart of purity. To inspire such a heart of purity in all is the true meaning behind the Buddha Day ceremony.



The Buddha Day Ceremony

Transcending the divisions of religion:

Dharma Master Cheng Yen says that all Tzu Chi volunteers should be grateful to Sakyamuni Buddha, because Tzu Chi is from Buddhism and Sakyamuni Buddha was the one who founded this religion. It is Master's hope that with the spirit of the Buddha's teachings, we can transcend the divisions between religions, and regardless of religion and race, spread the spirit of the Buddha's love to every corner of the world and gather the power from everyone in order to best serve the community.

The meaning behind the rituals in the ceremony

Using water in the ceremony:

Although the water which we use in the ceremony is not plenty, we need to visualize it as the water of wisdom that can purify our defilements and afflictions; we will be as Buddha, realizing the Dharmakaya, the Dharma-Body (the pure body).

Bowing and the use of scented water:

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In the past, the way to express one's reverence toward the Buddha is to prostrate oneself with one's head at the Buddha's feet, touching the Buddha's feet. Today, in the ceremony, we should have that same sense of reverence as we symbolically do the same by bowing and dipping our fingers in the water (as if to touch the Buddha's feet) and putting our palms together in reverence. The fragrance of the water, symbolizing the redolence of the Buddha's virtue, remains with us, just as we wish that the Buddha's virtue may abide in our hearts.

Every day is Buddha Day

To celebrate the Buddha's Birthday we have many solemn commemorations to express our reverence toward the Buddha. However, the truest and most earnest appreciation and reverence for the Buddha is to consider every day as Buddha Day. We should always treat others with gratitude, respect, and love.

Please join us at the [Tzu Chi location](#) near you.