

## Seeing the World with Compassionate Eyes

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
Monday, 03 March 2014 10:34

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At 3:22 PM on February 21, 2014, Calvin Hsi, a beloved member of the Tzu Chi family, quietly left this world. As the news of his passing was received, it was met not only with unspeakable grief, but shock as well. Physically, Calvin had been steadily becoming thinner over the past year, but no one knew that he struggled with a serious illness. We could hardly imagine that Calvin had already been diagnosed three years earlier or that one year ago his health had deteriorated even further, beginning to flicker like a candle in the wind. He had been warned to be vigilant and take it easy. But Calvin never strayed from the path he set for himself. He was determined to remain steady and joyful as he continued to tread the Bodhisattva Path.

Calvin Hsi was born on September 2, 1958, the youngest of four siblings. He was the much-loved baby of the family, but he never let himself become spoiled and proud. Instead he always remained humble and filial. Calvin's family originally hailed from Pinghu, Zhejiang, China. His father, the eighth-generation doctor in the Hsi family, often offered medical service to the poor. In 1993, a reporter for Tzu Chi Monthly magazine asked Dr. Hsi, "Is the ability to practice Chinese medicine an innate talent?" He answered, "Talent does matter, but the most important thing is to have the heart of a Bodhisattva." Calvin's mother was naturally cheerful and understanding, and always treated others equally. Calvin was clearly influenced by both of his parents, as he nurtured an optimistic attitude and a habit for helping others.

In 1976, Calvin moved to the Dominican Republic with his mother and siblings, and there he completed his high school education. In 1981, they immigrated to the United States, where Calvin completed a degree in architecture at the University of Southern California (USC) and became a professional architect. However, helping others was his nature and his heart's desire, and so he changed his focus and returned to USC to earn his Master of Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling and Psychology. He then took a job as Mental Health Therapist at the Asian Pacific Family Center in Rosemead, California.

In 1982, when Calvin's father, a Buddhist disciple, learned that Tzu Chi Foundation was building a Buddhist general hospital, he was very excited by the news. He immediately became a Tzu Chi donating member to support the hospital construction fund, and thus created an affinity between Tzu Chi and his son. Calvin himself encountered Buddhist Dharma in 1990, and he began to eagerly seek enlightenment. As time, causes, and conditions came together, he joined Tzu Chi. In 1991 he took refuge as Dharma Master Cheng Yen's disciple and was given the Dharma name of "Si Dao" (Contemplating the Way).

The year after he took refuge, Calvin returned to Hualien to participate in a training camp for Tzu Cheng Faith Corps members at Hualien Tzu Chi General Hospital. The dignified and orderly way in which the Tzu Cheng Faith Corps members carried themselves left a deep impression. After returning to the United States, Calvin became actively involved in Tzu Chi activities, and in 1995 was certified as a Tzu Cheng Faith Corps member. In the short bio he wrote as part of his application for certification, he expressed that he would feel deeply honored to be a part of the Tzu Cheng Faith Corps. He expected that "through group study, we can provide reminders to one another, and encourage one another in making our own behavior

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upright. With the spirit of ‘sincerity, integrity, trustworthiness, and honesty,’ I will diligently abide by the ten precepts that Master has painstakingly laid down. I will take the Buddha’s heart as my own heart, and Master’s mission as my own mission. To the best of my ability, I will use my strength to support and promote Tzu Chi’s missions.”



He also wrote, “After participating in the United States Tzu Cheng Faith Corps for several years, I have deeply understood why Master wants us to ‘cultivate our mind on all occasions, train our mind in all situations, and elevate our mind in all places.’ Performing guard duty in the Tzu Cheng Faith Corps involves standing guard like a military policeman, and it truly gives us a good opportunity to ‘cultivate our mind on all occasions.’ Planning all manner of activities and working together with Faith Corps teammates is a prime opportunity to ‘train our mind in all situations.’ Directing traffic, dealing with crises, and maintaining safety and order are even better learning environments for us to practice ‘elevating our mind in all places.’ Each time I participate in different activities and take on different responsibilities, I always learn and experience different things.”

Calvin never married. After his father passed away, he not only cared for his mother, but dedicated all his time and energy to working for Buddhism and for all living beings. Many years ago, he served as Tzu Cheng Faith Corps team leader for Tzu Chi USA, during which time he served with all his energy and strength, to the point where he was even hospitalized once with internal bleeding. When Tzu Chi USA was still severely lacking in manpower, Calvin served as a reporter for the magazine Tzu Chi World U.S.A. At events both large and small, he was always carrying a camera to record Tzu Chi’s history in the United States. He also led the Tzu Shao youth group for high-school-aged volunteers who lovingly referred to him as “Big Brother Hsi.” When Tzu Chi USA’s education team was actively developing its humanistic education program, he served as the team’s vice-director.

In 1998, when Tzu Chi USA established a training team, Calvin was a founding member who helped to plan the training curriculum. In both training classes and group study discussions, he utilized his mental health therapy skills and understanding of both Buddhist Dharma and Tzu Chi philosophy to lead fellow cultivators to explore their innate pure nature, recall their initial determination, and strengthen their resolve to walk the Bodhisattva Path, while also gathering together everyone’s determination.

In 2004, as Tzu Chi USA Headquarters actively sought employees, there was a special need for gifted professionals to help carry out its charity projects. Then-CEO Austin Tsao spared no energy in working to convince Calvin to take on the responsibility of heading up the charity department. After many discussions, Calvin felt Master Cheng Yen’s selfless commitment. Within a year, he successfully transferred all of his patients and left the Asian Pacific Family Center to serve as Tzu Chi’s Charity Development Department Director. He dedicated himself to Tzu Chi’s missions for the rest of his days, a decade that seemed to pass in the blink of an eye. In addition to his work helping the poor and suffering, because the number of

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Chinese-Americans dealing with emotional problems is ever-increasing, Calvin brought in friends from the mental health profession to help Tzu Chi establish a family counseling group in order to serve individuals who were spiritually lost.

After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Calvin immediately joined the relief effort to Port-au-Prince and returned there many times. Later that same year he was diagnosed with liver cancer, but he hid his diagnosis so as not to cause those around him to worry. Not only did he continue working, he became even more diligent in his Tzu Chi work and treasured even more his time spent together with each individual.



Calvin was a pure, gentle individual, of a kind rarely seen in this world. His eyes did not see others' faults, only their virtues, and he always had nothing but praise and gratitude for others. Calvin's moral integrity was widely recognized, so when Tzu Chi USA Headquarters established its Spiritual Care and Training Department two years ago, CEO Han Huang asked him to serve as its director, hoping that he could lead Tzu Chi volunteers to take the Dharma into their hearts and actions, strengthen their resolve, and gather together their determination.

Calvin was always very attentive and considerate, and he deeply treasured his friendships with others. Whenever a fellow cultivator visited from far away, he always arranged for friends to gather together over a meal. When it came to the other employees and volunteers he worked with, he would prepare little gifts by hand to give to each of them every Chinese New Year. On Thanksgiving Day and Chinese New Year's Eve—days when people gather together with their families—he would invite Los Angeles-area Tzu Chi volunteers who were living alone and unable to return home to all join his own family in sharing a meal together. Whenever anyone had a problem they didn't know how to deal with, all they had to do was give Calvin a call. No matter how much work he had before him, he would always set it aside to listen to their troubles with all his heart and resolve their suffering with his warm voice, and then work through the night to complete his own work.

At the end of 2013, as his body weakened, Calvin quit his job at Tzu Chi to convalesce at home. A week before he passed away, he was still able to drive his mother to the restaurant for his family's weekly dinner gathering. The next day, he set a little platform on his table in order to set his photograph of Dharma Master Cheng Yen a little higher up than it had been. He sat on his sofa, looking quietly at the photograph for ten minutes or more. Later, his mother realized that he had been saying farewell to Master in his heart.

On the morning of the 20th, Calvin collapsed at home and was rushed to the hospital. His brother and sisters stayed with him there, and his sister chanted the name of the Buddha by his ear. When he regained consciousness in the afternoon, he insisted on returning home. Back at home, he was calm and steady. He chatted with his family and even joked with his sister: "Sister, there's no need to chant so loud. I was also chanting in my heart." That night he rested

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peacefully, but the next morning his family noticed that something was wrong; his pulse had weakened. His sister advised him to let go of his attachments and accept the Buddha's plan, and she began to chant the Buddha's name and the Sutra of the Past Vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva. In the afternoon, Calvin peacefully left this world in his sleep.

Once they heard the news of Calvin's passing, more than one hundred Tzu Chi family members from all across Southern California flooded into his home to piously chant the name of the Buddha and send Calvin off on his final journey. Everyone took turns chanting until midnight, when his eyes, which had been peacefully closed, opened slightly. With a downward gaze and a solemn spirit, everyone was reminded of a passage in the Lotus Sutra: "Equipped with all blessings / Viewing all with compassionate eyes, / His ocean of accumulated blessings is immeasurable. / Heads should be bowed to him."\* In the midst of sorrow, these words brought a little solace.

Calvin's was not a long life, but his was a life that touched many others. His final act at Tzu Chi before he left was to plan a retreat in early December 2013 to commemorate Tzu Chi twenty-fourth anniversary in the United States. More than three hundred Tzu Chi volunteers were coming from all across the country for the event, and Calvin was responsible not only for planning the entire curriculum, but also for leading the class entitled "Returning to Our Pure Innate Nature." Now, Calvin himself has returned to the pure innate nature of beginningless time, and we all believe that he will soon return to Tzu Chi with this same pure heart so that he may again lead us by his example.

\*From the Reeves translation: Reeves, Gene. The Lotus Sutra. Wisdom Publications: Boston, 2008. (379)

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