



Opening Speech



Po-Wen Yen

Chief Executive Officer of Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation

Dear Dharma Master Cheng Yen, Master De Yuan of the Jing Si Abode, Professor Chen Jinhua from University of British Columbia and Dr. Rey Her, Deputy CEO of the Tzu Chi Foundation who are the initiators of this lecture series, and online representatives from Princeton University, Harvard University, Cambridge University, Oxford University, Columbia University, and Peking University, good morning, good afternoon, and good evening everyone! I am honored to welcome all distinguished representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, China, and Taiwan.

As Dharma Master De Yuan mentioned, Venerable Yin Shun promoted Humanistic Buddhism, and throughout his life, advocating “people-oriented Buddhism”. And for this, Venerable Yin Shun was awarded a doctorate from Taisho University in Japan by his publication of “A History of Zen Buddhism in China,” becoming the first Taiwanese Buddhist monastic to receive a doctorate degree.

From Venerable Yin Shun, Dharma Master Cheng Yen received the instruction of six-words, “for Buddha’s teachings, for sentient beings”. Putting these six words in action, in 1966, Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded the Buddhist Tzu Chi Merit Association, personally engaging in charitable works and carrying out the organizations’ four Missions of Charity, Medicine, Education, and Humanistic Culture as well as International Disaster Relief, Bone Marrow Donation, Community Volunteerism, and Environmental Protection, which together form the Foundation’s Eight Footprints. To date, Tzu Chi Foundation has provided relief in 126 countries and regions around the world and has Tzu Chi volunteers and branches in 66.

Over the past 20 months, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread globally, many countries and regions entered lock-down, making logistics of relief



materials extremely challenging. However, Tzu Chi Foundation was able to draw on the love and strength of our volunteers around the world, devoting themselves to pandemic prevention and relief efforts. As of July 2021, more than 38 million epidemic prevention materials, including personal protective equipment and medical equipment, have been provided in 93 countries and regions, and relief assistance programs in 41, benefiting over 9 million people.

Of particular concern this year was India and neighboring Nepal. Seeing the homeland of the Buddha devastated by COVID greatly affected Dharma Master Cheng Yen. Considering the vast area and diverse languages of the two countries, Tzu Chi Foundation quickly collaborated with over 40 local organizations, including the Camillians, the Missionaries of Charity, UPAY Foundation, Oxfam, Palpung Monastery, and Geo Foundation. Through charitable and interfaith collaboration with Buddhist, Catholic, Muslim, and other religious groups, the Foundation was able to provide epidemic prevention materials and assistance to not only India and Nepal but also neighboring countries of Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Laos, and Cambodia. To date, nearly 10 million epidemic prevention materials and food relief assistance have been provided to 229 organizations, and these efforts will continue into the future.

Over the past 55 years, Tzu Chi volunteers around the world “take the heart of the Buddha as their own heart and the mission of their teacher as their own.” And practice the compassionate spirit of the Great Vehicle through the “Tzu Chi School of Buddhism.” We bear in mind Dharma Master Cheng Yen’s teachings: “Earth-shattering disasters should bring about world-awakening realizations.” This pandemic is providing an important lesson for our times. The best remedy to mitigate this pandemic is for everyone to be vigilant and reverent, and observe a plant-based diet. Only by purifying people’s hearts with Dharma can our society be in harmony and the world be free from disasters and suffering.

Once again, I wish to express my gratitude and welcome the professors of seven world-renowned universities who are contributing their research and publications to this lecture series. With the utmost sincerity and reverence, let us open the “Yin-Cheng Distinguished Lecture Series on Buddhism”

