

A Letter to Dharma Protectors and Friends in 2020



Dear Dharma protectors and friends,
Auspicious greetings!

In the Year of the Rat, I, Hsin Bau, on behalf of the Fo Guang Shan Board of Directors, Abbots, Abbesses, Superintendents, and sangha communities of Fo Guang Shan temples worldwide, wish for everyone to do good things, speak good words, and think good thoughts. With the Three Acts of Goodness, every journey in this world is a path to happiness.

In January last year, Fo Guang Shan held the International Ten-Thousand Buddha Triple Platform Full Ordination Ceremony with preceptees from twenty-one countries and regions worldwide. The Sila Upadhyaya, Venerable Master Hsing Yun, encouraged everyone with this recollection, "Throughout my entire life, I have only focused on doing one thing, that is, to play the role of a monastic well."

The commemoration of Venerable Master's Renunciation Day fell on March 7th (Lunar February 1st) last year, and the Devotee's Gathering was held in Fo Guang Shan, including the release of Venerable Master's new book, *I am not a Dependent of the Buddha*. This was Venerable Master's first published work after recovering from his craniotomy two years ago. This book is a recounting of his 81-year journey as a monastic that holds true to the ideal of not living off the name of Buddhism and holding himself responsible for Buddhism's future, determined to be a person who repays gratitude.

The book has ranked among the best-selling books for months at EsLite Bookstore and Books.com.tw in Taiwan, and *Yazhou Zhoukan (Asia Weekly)* in Hong Kong. It is highly valued by readers worldwide. One after another, reading groups come together to share their thoughts on the book. In just five months, there have been more than 711 sharing sessions, with over 20,900 people participating. In August, Fo Guang Shan London hosted a book presentation in the Jubilee Room, located in the oldest building in the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Hall. The local youth scholars shared the theme of the book and explained Venerable Master's lifelong and selfless dedication to culture and education.

Last year, I visited several Fo Guang Shan branch temples—including those located in three regions across the Cross-Strait, Australia, Europe, Americas, Malaysia, the Philippines, and India—and witnessed Fo Guang Shan monastics working tirelessly to propagate the Dharma. Likewise, Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA) members have been diligent in their cultivation. For example, BLIA members have enthusiastically organized and involved themselves in various pursuits such as trainings, free medical services, blood drives, and activities such as beach cleaning, mountain cleaning, and tree planting—all for the betterment of society. This year, over 18,400 people took refuge in the Triple Gem and participated in the Five Precepts and Bodhisattva Precepts Ceremony. Furthermore, 4,300 children were blessed by Guanyin Bodhisattva in the Fo Guang Baby Blessing Ceremonies. This shows how BLIA members are beginning to pass down the legacy of faith.

We are ever grateful to the support of our volunteers, who have clocked in more than 100,000 times at headquarters. The FGS Volunteers Association actively develops towards being more international, youthful, and innovative. Besides partnering with Nanhua University, Fo Guang University, Kaohsiung University of Science and Technology, I-Shou University, Shih Chien University, Sun Yat-sen University, and Cheng Kung University to extend internships, the Association has provided volunteer opportunities at the monastery for over a hundred international backpackers from over twenty-six countries. Furthermore, it has trained experiential learning instructors to assist with activities held at Fo Guang Shan headquarters, schools, the military, and overseas branch temples—serving a total of around 5,000 people.

In June, the *Complete Works of Venerable Master Hsing Yun—Simplified Chinese Edition* was published by New Star Press of the China International Publishing Group. The book release was held in Nanjing Library and reported by 43 media representatives from seven countries and regions. Lu Cairong, Deputy Director of the China Foreign Languages Publishing Administration, said, "The *Complete Works* is a treasure set that introduces the wisdom of Buddhism, and is an important part of the wonderful tradition of Chinese culture. It brings positive energy to the cross-strait, and even into society and internationally." Venerable Master also presented the *Complete Works* to twelve schools, including the National Library of China, National Museum of China, Peking University, Beijing Normal University, Tsinghua University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and Fudan University, as well as the Buddhist Academy of China and Buddhist Association of China. Temples worldwide have also gifted the *Complete Works* to local universities, libraries, governmental departments, and religious associations.

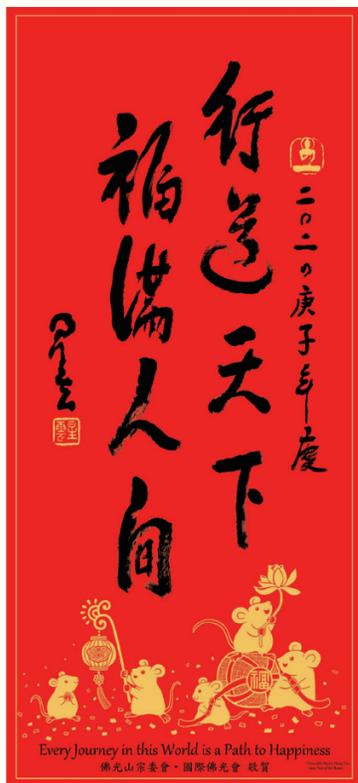
In April, Hsi Lai Temple and the University of the West in Los Angeles, USA, co-organized the "Expression of the Dharma: Buddhist Art and Culture in Everyday Life" Academic Forum. The panel on the *Encyclopedia of Buddhist Art* was the focus, and many scholars quoted the encyclopedia in their papers, affirming its value to research. The encyclopedia was also presented to Ryukoku University, Japan; University of Houston and Rice University, USA; University of Göttingen, Germany; Cambridge University, UK; McGill University, Canada; University of Vienna, Austria; Rietberg Museum, Zurich, Switzerland; and the private

library of the Stift-Klosterneuburg Monastery, Austria.

Since the founding of the Center for Buddhist Studies at Fo Guang University, Venerable Master hopes to offer a diverse academic platform for Buddhist research by establishing a worldwide major center of Buddhist studies. In August, there was a series of events about the Buddhist Canons—Timeless Dharma Treasures Reappearing—organized by Fo Guang Shan Monastery, Fo Guang University, Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education, and the Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism. The Exhibition of Buddhist Manuscripts, Public Dharma Talks on Stories of the Buddhist Canon, and International Conference on Buddhist Canons interpreted and explained the Dharma treasures of Buddhism—Buddhist canons. Through such events, we hope to bring Buddhist canons into society, so the public may feel the magnificence of the Dharma and further understand Buddhist culture.

Furthermore, we have worked proactively with local universities to organize joint academic conferences on Humanistic Buddhism to promote the establishment of research centers within top universities, so that Humanistic Buddhism may flourish worldwide. The departments and branch temples that actively contributed to this endeavor include: the Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism, Fo Guang University, Nanhua University, University of the West, Nan Tien Institute, Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum, Hsing Yun Culture and Education Center in Shanghai, Jianzhen Library in Yangzhou, Guangzhong Culture and Education Center in Beijing, Yunhu Academy, Hsi Lai Temple, Fo Guang Shan London, and Fo Guang Shan Singapore.

The "Nanhua University FGS Million Member Fundraising Campaign Memorial Hall," commissioned by the Million Member Fundraising Committee, was inaugurated at Nanhua University in May. Committee members are welcome to return to the university and make use of the Assembly Hall, Meditation Hall, Water Drop Teahouse, multi-purpose meeting rooms, and guest rooms. The Million-Member Fundraising Campaign showed the world what NTS100 can do, with funds initially raised for one university, and now for five outstanding universities.



When the admission results from the Advanced Subjects tests were released last year, both Fo Guang and Nanhua University received full enrollment. In July, the Ministry of Education approved the establishment of Ph.D. courses at the Department of Life and Death at Nanhua University. Moreover, with Venerable Master's guidance, the fourth FGS University Presidents Forum had 123 presidents and educators from 32 different universities in 16 countries and regions meet and share their valuable opinions on Buddhist research and the revival of Buddhism. The five universities comprising the FGS University Consortium signed a memorandum of understanding with 29 participating institutions, to work together to educate talents for the world and to look forward to Buddhist education playing a key role in global academic research.

Additionally, it has been three years since the Venerable Master Hsing Yun Public Education Trust Fund and the FGS Foundation for Culture and Education supported the Seeds of Hope Project; five junior high school graduates of Pu-Men High School were admitted by the Kaohsiung Municipal Senior High School and Kaohsiung Municipal Girls' Senior High School after participating in the Kaohsiung high school exam-free admission. In July, Juntou International School in Puli, Nantou, received approval from the Cambridge Assessment International Education so that students may study international courses that connects them to the world.

Last year, the Hsing Yun Culture and Education Foundation held various cultural and educational activities, including international and Cross-Strait exchanges, as well as answering the call of the Poverty Alleviation Program in Mainland China. The foundation received the 2019 Best Social Responsibility Brand Award and the Green Classics Award at the 9th China Charity

Festival.

In October, the Global Buddhists for World Peace Exchange and the BLIA First Meeting of the 7th Board of Directors returned to Paris, France, after 23 years, and was held at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This is a new milestone in BLIA's efforts of propagating Humanistic Buddhism. For many years, BLIA has been an active participant as well as speaker in many activities held by the United Nations and its associated organizations, including: the Commission on the Status of Women held at UN Headquarters in New York, UN Civil Society Conference, and World Interfaith Harmony Week. This international exchange asserted BLIA as an association that approaches the world by taking root through localization, and also devoted to world peace. The meeting's theme was "Faith and Legacy," and through video, Venerable Master encouraged international Fo Guang Shan members to work together and pass down the legacy of faith, morality, benevolence, and character for the development of Buddhism, so that these values become a mainstream ideology in Buddhism's future.

In November, the 11th Truthful, Virtuous, and Beautiful Media Award was presented in Singapore for the first time. Professor Su Heng, from National Chengchi University College of Communication, and Lee Huay Leng, Head of Chinese Media Group (CMG) Singapore Press Holdings Limited (SPH) were honored with the Award for Outstanding Contribution. Nearly three hundred people from well-known media groups from Singapore, Malaysia, and the Cross-Strait gathered at the ceremony, achieving the consensus of "upholding the mission and responsibility of maintaining professionalism and disseminating right knowledge."

For over fifty years, Fo Guang Shan has always nurtured affinities with other religious groups. In April, the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris was caught in a serious fire. On behalf of the Fo Guang Shan community, I wrote a letter to Pope Francis, expressing our condolences and willingness to help with the restoration work. Patrick Chauvet, the Archbishop and Dean of Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris, replied to express their gratitude. I believe that though the source of each religion may differ, the mission to bring peace and harmony to society is the same.

Furthermore, under the invitation of Hsi Lai Temple, USA, the original Chinese Opera production, *Voyage to the East: A Fearless Buddhist Monk's Mission to Japan*, gave three performances at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, Los Angeles, and at the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center, New York; with over 4,500 people attending. This is the first Buddhist opera performed on the international stage, promoting cultural exchange between the East and West.

In June, Fo Guang Shan Philippines co-organized "FLIP 2019: The Light of Education" Concert at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in Manila, presenting the students' learning results through artistic performance for supporters of education. Moreover, Ralph Jade Tampal, a graduate of the Department of Performing Arts at Guang Ming College, was awarded at the 58th anniversary of the Ten Outstanding Students of the Philippines, Manila Region (TOSP).

In September, good news was delivered by Nan Tien Institute. The Humanistic Buddhism Centre, established in 2018, received approval from the Australian Department of Education for the Humanistic Buddhism Graduate Certificate. Humanistic Buddhism is now officially accepted in the Australian education system, another splendid achievement for Buddhism.

The "Hand in Hand, We Became" Buddhist Society Youth Leadership Camp initiated by Fo Guang Shan Malaysia entered its 10th year. Not only is it supported by the Ministries of Education in all 13 states, but it also inspired Malaysian schools to learn about Buddhism. Nearly 10,000 teachers and students have participated in the camp over the past ten years.

Every month, more than 50 FGS Cloud and Water Mobile Libraries provide service to 1,300 rural schools, and this good affinity is sustained by the FGS Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education to develop educational and cultural projects in rural areas. For example, the Seeds of Hope Scholarship, as well as financial aid for English and Music, hope to transform the lives of disadvantaged children.

At the start of the year, the institutional sports teams under Fo Guang Shan's Three Acts of Goodness Sports Association have had excellent performances. Fo Guang University Women's Basketball Team, who made it into level 1 of the University Basketball Association Open Tournament for seven consecutive years, has finally won its first championship. In July, they were also runners-up at the BLIA Cup International University Basketball Tournament in Kaohsiung Arena. Pu-Men High School Girls Basketball Team won second place in the High School Basketball League. Nanhua University's Brazilian "Sons of Zulai" soccer team, now three years old, also won second place in level 1 of the University Soccer Association Opening for Men. The Nanhua Baseball Team, established less than three years ago, entered the semi-final for the first time in the team's history. As per the saying, "the Buddha taught with one voice, which was then perceived and understood by sentient beings according to their own perspectives," Venerable Master believes in spreading Dharma worldwide by building international friendships with others through establishing excellent Buddhist sports teams.

During the Buddha's Birthday last year, FGS branch temples all over the world continued to conduct Buddha's Birthday celebration in city councils, schools, prisons, shopping malls, markets, harbors, hospitals, local temples, and even co-organized Buddha's Birthday celebrations with local Buddhist communities, totaling nearly 1,300 celebratory events, and 508,000 participants. These events have inspired unity, collaboration, and harmony within the Buddhist sphere.

Last year, there was also good news from branch temples and Fo Guang Shan institutes worldwide to rejoice: the colossal jade-carved wall sculpture located in the Main Shrine of Fo Guang Shan Hsingma Temple gained the record for "the largest jade art sculpture" nationwide, and was listed into the Malaysia Book of Records along with the New Year-themed lanterns at Dong Zen Temple. "Marvelous Malaysia Music Concert—Blessing for the Nation" held at Stadium Malawati Shah Alam attracted over 8,000 youths. The event was acknowledged by the Malaysian Ministry of Education and invitation letters were sent to educational institutions of all levels to encourage student participation.

Fo Guang Shan Monastery, FGS Buddha Museum, and Templo Zulai in Brazil received the Certificate of Excellence once again from TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel platform, and were inducted into its Hall of Fame. As a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the Buddha Museum not only signs memorandums of understanding with other museums and participates in exchanges, it distinguishes itself by serving the public in disciplines spanning across culture, education, arts, and medicine. Annually, it is a venue used by more than 300 organizations, a site visited by guests from over 110 countries and regions, and a stop made by around 40 cruise ships. Furthermore, the Buddha Museum hosts various international exhibitions and the "When Buddha Meets the Gods: Reunion of Religious Associations" event.

At the end of March, Miao Hui Lou Dormitory, built by FGS Pure Land Cultural & Educational Foundation for Fo Guang Shan staff, received the Yuan Ye Awards, also known as the "Oscars of Southern Taiwan Landscape Architecture." In July, the renovated Pure Land Cave at headquarters was registered under the Kaohsiung City Building Permit No.01459 as issued by the Public Works Bureau of Kaohsiung City Government. The underground level of the new structure retains the Pure Land Cave which shares the Dharma with the public through sutra depictions. Meanwhile, the two levels above ground are used as spaces for culture and education. Named by Venerable Master as the Convention Lodge, it features classrooms, lecture halls, and dormitories, making it an ideal venue for classes and meetings. Additionally, the new Treasure Bridge connecting the Main Shrine and the Great Compassion Shrine, as well as the elevator at the Gateway to Enlightenment, were completed. According to Venerable Master, these structures create an accessible space by providing those with mobility difficulties a way to reach the shrines and connect with the buddhas and bodhisattvas without obstruction.

In June, Fo Guang Shan Guang Ming Institute of Performing Arts Cebu was inaugurated, right on the 30th anniversary of Dharma propagation in the Philippines. It is the first academy in the locality that offers professional performing arts courses to youths and artists. Furthermore, it gives them a platform to showcase their talents.

In February, the northeast part of Australia experienced the worst flooding in 100 years. The Queensland State became a water town. At the beginning of March, Paraguay was affected by heavy rains daily. Provinces and counties south of the capital, Asunción, were heavily flooded. In October, Japan was hit with the strongest typhoon in 61 years—Typhoon Hagibis. Over 10,000 homes were flooded. BLIA members gave aid, practiced generosity, and made offerings in the spirit of empathy as shown by the saying, "When others are hungry, it is as if I am hungry; when others are drowning, it is as if I am drowning." May all aspirations be blessed by the Buddha's light, and grow in merit and wisdom.

Venerable Master said, "We very much treasure the next generation, caring for the legacy of Buddhism. For every Chinese person, while some will claim that their faith is Catholicism or Protestant, Buddhism is in their blood. Buddhism has almost become the religion of the elder generation, I hope that we can pass this invaluable bloodline to the next generation. The hope of Buddhism rests in the future, the next generation!" The words of Venerable Master require everyone's effort to benefit and enlighten themselves and others, so that Buddhism may continue to prosper.

As we enter into a new year, bring not past habitual tendencies and afflictions into the new beginning; transform greed, hatred, and ignorance into meditative concentration and wisdom. If each day is spent wholesomely, it will surely be at ease, safe, and auspicious.

Lastly, my best wishes to you in
Creating good affinities together.
May all be auspicious!

Hsin Bau
Head Abbot
Chairperson, Fo Guang Board of Directors
New Year's Day, 2020

(Translated by FGS Institute of Humanistic Buddhism
Center of International Affairs)