

Memorial inscription of the life and epitaph of Grand Master Weichueh Zhi'an, 57th generation of the Linji School, founder of Chung Tai Chan Monastery.

The Grand Master was a native of Yingshan in Sichuan province, China. In 1963, he was ordained as a novice monk under the Venerable Master Lingyuan, a Dharma heir of the great Master Xuyun (Empty Cloud), at Shifang Dajue (Great Enlightenment) Chan Monastery in Keelung, Taiwan. He was given the courtesy name Zhi'an and the Dharma name Weichueh. Afterwards, he went on to Jixiang Temple in Yilan, Yuanming Temple in Hsinchu, Po Lin Monastery in Lantau Island, Hong Kong, and a hut in the mountains of Wanli in northern Taiwan, practicing the Dharma in seclusion for more than a decade.

In 1987, at the request of his followers, the Grand Master emerged from seclusion to spread the Dharma. Together with his disciples, he weeded and cleared the ground, carried bricks, laid walls, and grew calluses on his palms and soles to complete the construction of Lingquan Monastery at the place where his hut used to be. Soon after, he held his first Chan-7 meditation retreat. Although small in scale, it breathed new life into a traditional Chan practice that had been on the decline in Chinese Buddhism. For 49 days in 1991, the Grand Master conducted seven consecutive Chan-7 retreats, steadfastly reinvigorating the Chan tradition in Taiwan. Before long, Lingquan Monastery could no longer accommodate the growing number of monastic and lay disciples who came to practice Chan meditation and learn the Dharma. So, the Grand Master began planning the construction of a larger monastery at Puli, Nantou in central Taiwan. After three years of planning and seven years of construction, Chung Tai Chan Monastery was finally inaugurated in 2001.

It takes years to grow trees to build a temple, but decades to educate monastics to turn the Dharma wheel. The Grand Master personally practiced and established the Three Links of Cultivation—integrating the disciplines of meritorious service, scripture study, and meditation—as a guiding principle for cultivators. He also promoted sangha education, social education, and scholastic education. From practicing in seclusion to turning the Dharma wheel, whether in action or stillness, he had always diligently lived by the Buddhist teaching, leading his disciples to fulfill the bodhisattva way. Embodying the teaching, “when in stillness, rest all thoughts; when in action, perfect all actions,” the Grand Master set an exemplary model of Buddhist cultivation for all.

During the construction of Chung Tai Chan Monastery, the Grand Master also founded the Chung Tai Buddhist Institute and worked towards establishing 108 meditation centers throughout Taiwan and around the world. He also held large-scale Dharma ceremonies, gave hundreds of Dharma lectures, and presided over ten sessions of Chan-7 retreats annually. In addition, he regularly transmitted the Three Refuges, the Five Precepts, the Eight Prohibitive and Fasting Precepts, as well as the Triple Platform Ordination and the Bodhisattva Precepts.

By way of the Dharma, Chan meditation, and the precepts, the Grand Master purified our minds and transformed countless lives. For thirty years, he led his disciples, one step and one footprint at a time, to create the Chung Tai World. With the Four Tenets of Chung Tai—to our elders be respectful; to

our juniors be kind; with all humanity be harmonious; in all endeavors be true—the Grand Master laid down the guiding principles for practicing Buddhism and upholding the integrity of the sangha. By integrating Buddhism with academic study, education, art, science, and daily living, he spread the Dharma to a broad spectrum of people, kindling the luminosity inherent in everyone’s original nature.

He also actively advocated Buddhist and cultural exchange between the two sides of the Taiwan strait, advancing mutual prosperity and world peace. Moreover, based on the Buddhist spirit of learning to realize enlightenment, he founded the Pu Tai elementary, junior high, and senior high schools—establishing a model for educating well-rounded individuals. As testimony to the historical development of Buddhism, and to preserve traditional Chinese culture, he dedicated himself to the construction of the Chung Tai World Museum, creating a platform for spreading the Dharma through the transformative power of art.

On April 8, 2016, the Grand Master completed his life-long journey of bodhisattva cultivation. Surrounded by his monastic disciples, he passed on peacefully at the age of 90, with the monastic age of 53 autumns and the precept age of 52 summers. He had two thousand ordained disciples and hundreds of thousands of lay followers. On the day of the memorial service and cremation ceremony, more than 30,000 grieving disciples of the fourfold assembly lined the miles from the Monastery gate to the funeral pagoda to bid their last farewell to our beloved teacher.

Manifest outwardly as an ordained monk,
Accord inwardly with the unsurpassed seal,
Practice unwaveringly the bodhisattva way,
Guiding all sentient beings to enlightenment.

These principles encompass not only the Grand Master’s aspirations for his monastic disciples, but are also a portrait of his own life. From his legacy—Chung Tai, Chan spreads far and wide, taking root wherever it lands. May this memorial inscription forever testify to the Grand Master’s life, passing his example down to Dharma descendants, that it will always remain their guiding light.

Inscription:

The Tathagata’s realization, the great cause of his manifestation,
He teaches Chan, spreads the Dharma, and points the way to pure awareness.
A guiding star shines high above, leading all to the mind’s wellspring;
The surrounding stars rise in turn, spreading brilliance across the chiliocosm.
Bodhi Mountain Vulture Peak, no duality, middle, nor extremities;
A towering figure, the great teacher, forever lives in our hearts.

Commemorated on the eighth day of April, two thousand seventeen, the one-year memorial anniversary of our founding abbot’s passing, by his ordained disciple Jiandeng, with other Dharma descendants and relatives.