

## Sa pangalan ng Buddha

In the name of the Buddha

### Philippines' Buddhist century and Dhamma millennium

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The teachings of the historical Buddha have come to the Philippines with good news of love, compassion, joy and peace. We are planting the Bodhi tree in this land. We must work first to prepare the ground that is fertile so that the tree of awakening will grow with shade and fruit for all.

#### Tree of awakening

We have heard of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and how eating its fruit has brought sin and suffering into this world. The Bodhi tree is the tree of **awakening**, which frees us from all sin and suffering. **Suffering** means that we are still sleep-walking in greed, hate and delusion: we must awaken to the true goodness that is inside us.

When the Bodhi tree starts growing in our land, we will see the Buddha there sitting radiantly joyful. To grow and guard this tree demands all our goodness and wisdom. At first, it is like the tree of suffering, a cross, upon which Christ was crucified. We must bear this cross: to grow and guard the Bodhi tree in our beloved country.

#### The cross of truths

The **cross** has 4 arms: they represent the 4 truths of suffering.

The longest arm is planted solidly in the ground. This is the 1<sup>st</sup> truth: there is **suffering**: our own ignorance and craving. The earth is our body: people step on the earth, digging and moving it around, dumping all kinds of rubbish on it. But the earth is unmoved, always there giving us ground to stand on. We are that earth. This is the Buddha's love in teaching us how to free ourselves from sin and suffering.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> arm is on the left: it represents the noble truth of the **arising** of suffering. We are born into knowing good and evil taught to us by others. But we do not understand what they really mean. Good and evil are how our mind works. When we harm others (or even think of it), we harm ourselves, too: for, we are all humans. When we are kind to others, we feel joy in us. For **joy** arises out of love, the 1<sup>st</sup> fruit of Godliness taught by the Buddha.

Whenever we see the cross, reflect on the 4 noble truths.

#### Ending of suffering and the path

The 3<sup>rd</sup> arm of the cross is on the right, which reminds us **to act, speak and think** what are right, good and liberating. This is the **ending** of suffering. What has a beginning also has an ending; what arises will cease. Only we can make this happen; we **must** make this happen. No one else can bear our cross; no one else can journey for us.

The 4<sup>th</sup> arm of the cross points upwards, heavenward. This is the **path** of awakening from the sleep of ignorance and suffering. As we walk the path of awakening, we rise to become better humans. Then, we see the **divinity**, the Godliness in us ever more radiantly.

### **Walking humbly**

We already know this as the Temple of God is within us, our body, speech and mind. This means that we are empowered to free ourselves from suffering: this is the Buddha's message. The path to freedom is there; we must walk it ourselves.

This is called self-reliance. It means understanding our own **mind** from which all ignorance and craving arise. The Buddha teaches us to know our mind, to tame it and to free it. This is what is meant by the saying "**walk humbly with your god.**" We may not be God, but when we live with love, compassion, joy and peace, this is **godliness** inside us. This is our Heaven right here and now in our earthly life.

"Walk humbly with your God" means to take the Buddha's teaching just as it is, as taught by the Buddha. We will not let our lust, hate or delusion change or hide the teaching, but **humbly** work to follow the path to true freedom.

Whenever we hear the word "God," we should reflect on our own Godliness: love, compassion, peace and joys.

### **Enjoy the body but have a heart**

Those of us who have taken the way of purity, who have vowed to keep celibacy and live the simple life of charity must keep to our **vows**. We are monks and nuns of the Buddha. Our body is dedicated to the Buddha; our heart is the Dhamma (the true teaching); our speech is the sacred fellowship of all men in Godliness.

When the body of a monk or a nun falls for **sex**, it will never be able to rise above its frail human state to taste and live the higher mind of profound joy. When a monk or a nun lives a pure life they have freely vowed to live, they will truly help the Bodhi tree to grow in our country. They teach by their own good example.

Much more than the monks and nuns are the **lay followers** of the Buddha. We have only one rule to follow: **a life of love** at all levels. We cannot love God when we do not love even our parents, spouse, family, friends, countrymen and fellow humans. To love God means to see the Godliness in us and in everyone, to embrace them just as they are, and show them the **joy** that frees them from their suffering. This is called **lovingkindness**.

### **The good life**

As lay followers of the Buddha, our first love is for **life** itself. For, without life, we are nothing. To love life is to **respect** life (our body, speech and mind): how we work with them and what we can be. Our work gives us life, gives value to our life. To love life means to understand

our **body**, which is capable of giving us the pleasures of sex, which with love, gives us family and perpetuates humanity.

But there is a **greater pleasure** that far outshines sexual pleasure. This is what the monks and nuns live and work for. As laymen, we too can, when we feel and live this divine pleasure, live this godly life like angels without wings right here as humans. This choice is ours.

These are **truths** that are above all religions whose fruits act on us whether we are religious or not. For all this to fruit, we must have the **heart and mind** for it. The Buddha reminds us to keep our heart and mind clear of intoxicants and cloudiness so that we see and feel all these joys fully and all our life.

This is how to help the Bodhi tree grow in the Philippines for the Buddhist century and the Dhamma millennium.

In the Buddha's name I give you this. Sa pangalan ng Buddha.

R703 Revisioning Buddhism 287

[an occasional re-look at the Buddha's Example and Teachings]

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