

# Bodhisattva Family

## Newsletter

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VOLUME 3

### Why the Altruistic Home-Leaving Program is Necessary Today

(From the book *Xuất Gia Vị Tha* 2013)

*Thầy Hằng Trường*

Leaving home to become a monastic has always been a great and noble merit since the Buddha did it and advised us to do it too.

There are three kinds of home leaving, according to the Buddha's teachings:

1. Leaving at home the mundane and shaving the head to become a monastic for life.
2. Leaving at home the suffering of all attachments, greeds, desires, and selfish habits, cleansing away all mental grief. Those who leave the mundane behind usually succeed in letting go of their suffering, as do those with great virtues although they stay home.

3. Leaving the three realms of desires, forms, and formlessness. This requires diligent practice.

In Buddhism, arhats are truly those who have accomplished this. Leaving the three realms is the one of the noblest ideologies of a monastic since it was the main motivation for the Buddha to leave his palace for the forest in search of enlightenment.

When Mahayana Buddhism developed broadly, the ideology of leaving the three realms is complemented with the concept of returning to the three realms to help and save living beings.

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## Why the Altruistic Home-Leaving Program is Necessary Today

That is the ideology of bodhisattvas who advocate the path of service, educating, and touching people's hearts so they can build good, positive, and useful lives. In the Avatamsaka Sutra, this ideology is often manifested in the story of a bodhisattva working as a boatman who constantly and tirelessly ferries people to the other shore. He never thinks of what he will get or gain for himself, but only cares about taking his passengers to the other shore safely.

The boatman's spirit is also the essential spirit of the Bodhisattva Path, namely the altruistic spirit. Advancing the Bodhisattva Path is developing the altruistic consciousness of serving others.

Thus, the so-called *short-term home leaving* (XGVT) has been created to develop the Bodhisattva Path for home leaving.

A short-term home-leaving participant also shaves their head, temporarily leaves home, and practices being a monastic for a week or two, or a month or two. During this time, the short-term monks or nuns will practice hard not for their own sake or liberation, but on behalf of someone else, or dedicate all merits to a person or a group of people who need merits and prayers.

An essential difference between lifelong monastics and short-term monastics is the precepts. For the former, a monk receives 250 precepts and a nun, 348 precepts. For the latter, both novice monks and nuns receive only 10 precepts, since the practice time is too short to learn and understand fully the precepts' meanings. Besides, short-term monastics still have families, jobs, and social responsibilities, so the XGVT program only wants to introduce the noble content of the home leaving path instead of focusing on in-depth details.



## Why the Altruistic Home-Leaving Program is Necessary Today

In fact, they will be guided so they can easily feel the greatness of transcending worldliness, the beauty of home leaving, the noble spirit of the awakening path, and the purity and serenity of a monastic life. From feeling to experiencing and appreciating, short-term practitioners will unfold their Bodhi minds and resolve to follow the Bodhisattva Path. This is the most important direction of the Altruistic Short-Term Home Leaving program of CSS, so called to emphasize the spirit and foundation of the program.

Since the inception of the XGVT program in 2006, all participants have left home on behalf of their loved ones, their friends or acquaintances, or a group of people suffering from a natural or man-made disaster.

Anyone can join the altruistic sangha. Once they resolve to do so, they have to shave their heads, receive and uphold ten precepts, learn about the proper deportment and conduct of a monastic, and bring forth the mind to apply the Buddhist quintessence in daily life. In so doing, they maintain the precepts, continue to practice the Buddha's teachings, and prove worthy of the help and support from dharma supporters, volunteers, lay people, and believers.

Thus, the very positive and goodness-oriented nature of the Altruistic Short-Term Home Leaving program can truly develop its benevolent purpose and influence in our family, community, and everyone in our web of affinity.





## Chat with Sa di - Sa di ni

# Flowers Bloom in the Heart

Thân Khai Nghinh Đổ (Lani)

Time flies. This year is the 7th year that I have attended the Altruistic Temporary Monks and Nuns Retreat organized by Compassionate Service Society in Orange County. You must have wondered why I shaved my head so many times? Simply, just because I see that the program has brought a lot of benefits to myself and those around me.



The benefit for yourself is a healthy body, peace of mind, and a more altruistic mind. The benefit for others is that throughout the days of practice and 3 days of World Peace Gathering, the Sangha has wholeheartedly spread love and prayers to everyone. We pray for the world to be safe; for everybody to treat each other with love; for all the spirits to enter the light of liberation of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The Sangha also contributed to the building of a community that practice Buddha's teachings, everyone having the opportunity to sit together, cultivate the path of liberation, to eliminate evil karma, and help achieve a life of happiness and peace.

## Flowers Bloom in the Heart

The benefits of the Temporary Monks and Nuns program are still many, but after talking with some friends, I have come to know that although a large number of them really wants to fulfill the dream of experiencing the life of a monk or a nun, they are still unable to go forth due to obstacles with family, work, or business, etc.. Therefore, my dear friends, when the opportunity allows, please try to register once, especially if you have never attended the Retreat before.

Some other friends confided that another small obstacle preventing them from achieving their dream of living in a Zen environment was the problem of shaving their hair. I sympathize with your hair as an external decoration, not only for women but also for men. Most of you are hesitant because you don't know how your appearance will be after you shave your hair; will it get worse? how will your daily work with co-workers be affected, etc. Honestly, before 2014 I had the same thoughts as yours.



## Flowers Bloom in the Heart

But by the end of 2014, after my Mother suddenly passed away, my thoughts changed completely; the anxiety, worry, and problem of shaving my head were also completely gone. The only thing I wanted at that time, was just to live my days in silence, in a completely serene environment, so I can pray for my Mother to follow the light of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and be soon liberated. My Mother has sacrificed her whole life, arduously raising me from the time I was a fetus in her womb until I grew up to be a human being; today even though my hair is gray, she still worries about every bite of food I eat and how I sleep. Hence the fact that I shave my head to dedicate to my mother's liberation is nothing compared to the great love and sacrifice she has for me.



## Flowers Bloom in the Heart

In the first year of Altruistic Leaving Home, I shaved my head mainly for my beloved Mother. Over the years that followed, I was delighted to see my altruistic consciousness begin to expand. It becomes easier for me now to sacrifice my hair, money, effort, and time for others. I am willing to dedicate all the merits of my cultivation to all those who are suffering from illness, those who have left this world without family by their side during the COVID pandemic, victims of war and so on.

After hearing my story, I hope you can join us in this year's Temporary Monks

and Nuns program, so that our mind will be more pure and altruistic every day, leading to a happier and more peaceful life; to transfer our merits of cultivation to our web of affinity so they can always be safe and healthy; to pray for all those in the world who are living in hardship and difficulty to soon find joy in life again; to lead sentient beings who have lost their lives because of sickness, pandemics, wars, terrorism, and natural disasters to soon step on the lotus flowers, rise higher and be drawn into the light of liberation.

Let's make our mind like a garden full of love and fragrant flowers of liberation.



# Training Review

## Sash receiving

Passed down from the Buddha, the precious sash symbolizes the field of blessings that the Buddha and the monastics represent.

## Bowl receiving

I vow to open up my heart and mind for loving kindness and wisdom to nurture the Dharma body. I vow to keep my mind empty and ready to store all the goodness.

## Sitting Cloth receiving

The four sides of the sitting cloth represent limitless love (compassion), harmony and lovability (loving kindness), optimism and the spirit of always bringing joy to others (altruistic joy), gentleness, peacefulness, non-attachment, easy to let go, to give and to sacrifice (equanimity).

## The meaning of the first three locks of hair when shaving head

**The first lock of hair:** We remember our parents' merits and sacrifices in raising us.

**The second lock of hair:** We remember our school teachers and spiritual masters who have taught us to become mature, good, and educated.

**The third lock of hair:** We appreciate our spouse and family members for everything they've done for us.

After that, with each lock of hair falling down, it's like we're letting go of our afflictions.

## Ten Precepts for Novice Monks and Nuns

1. No killing
2. No stealing
3. No sexual misconduct
4. No lying
5. No drinking, no taking drugs
6. No wearing flowers, jewelry, perfume, or makeup
7. No singing, dancing, performing, or watching musical shows or entertainment
8. No sleeping in high and large beds
9. No eating beyond fixed mealtime
10. No keeping or using cash, gold, or precious gems

# Contact and Info.

## ANNOUNCEMENT ALTRUISTIC HOME LEAVING 2022

THE SANGHA 2022 WILL TAKE PLACE FROM NOVEMBER 26- DECEMBER 5, 2022 AT PINE SUMMIT CAMP

THE TRAINING PROGRAM OF XGVT WILL START JULY 10- NOVEMBER 13, 2022

Please go online to register:  
<http://xuatgiavitha.com>



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The XGVT committee would like to ask all sangha brothers, sisters, and friends to share your special life story or experience that had an impact on your decision for Altruistic Home Leaving.

Please send your contribution to the following email address:

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