

# Bodhisattva Family

## Newsletter

VOLUME 4

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## Chatting with Sa di - Sa di ni

### Heartfelt Words of a Novice Nun

*Viết theo lời thuật của Sadini Thân Khai Tùng Quán (Hương Huỳnh)*

As a long-time CSS member, I've always admired those who join the sangha every year for the Altruistic Short-Term Home-Leaving Program, but I never thought that I'd do the same thing some day.

Since I'm shy by nature and had never left my cozy nest, the thought of shaving my head and living with others away from my family was quite a far-fetched vision for me then, even though I really enjoy practicing the dharma. Who could expect that my peaceful life would be jolted by my younger brother's sudden death due to Covid-19? The grief of being unable to see him to say goodbye agonized me for weeks and months. I cried countless times, and my heart was always heavy with anguish over his death.

My CSS brothers and sisters advised me to leave home as a temporary nun to practice on my brother's behalf. For months, I was torn between worry and faith, my personal



weakness and my love for him. I kept praying to the Buddhas to help me have more faith than worry when thinking about leaving home the very first time. I recited the Great Compassion Mantra daily and asked Kuan Yin Bodhisattva to grant my love for my brother to be stronger than my frailty of always relying on my husband and children for everything. Perhaps, thanks to my CSS family members' caring and encouraging words as well as my heartfelt prayers to the enlightened ones above, strong faith came to me and led me to join the Short-Term Home-Leaving Program for the first time last year, in December 2021.

## Heartfelt Words of a Novice Nun

The week of living and practicing with the sangha members who gave me so much care, support, and love brought me a deep spiritual transformation. Initial uncertainty and insecurity gave way to peacefulness and enthusiasm. I tried hard to focus on my practice and vowed to show my love to my brother through my actions. Hence, when my legs ached or my back hurt, when I felt tired from lack of sleep, when I walked in snowy and cold weather, I just thought of my brother and the altruistic merits of my home-leaving, I could then overcome all difficulties and obstacles.

On the day we entered the Mandala, I wholeheartedly prayed for my brother to be liberated. The Four-Lotus Dharma was truly miraculous. The Mandala Dharma



power to free all souls from suffering was inconceivable, beyond thoughts and words. If I wrote down all the amazing feelings I experienced, I'm afraid their sacredness might be lost.

However, I could clearly feel the liberation of my brother, without any doubt. When the final bows for the Mandala ended, I stood up with tears rolling down my cheeks. Once again, I tasted the familiar saltiness of my tears, except that all the grief and agony were gone from my heart, as if they have vanished into the wonderful atmosphere of the Mandala. Previously, I'd cried in mourning and grief. That day, I cried in happiness for myself and for my brother.

This year, I've also made a vow to leave home on behalf of my brother's family and my family, as well as for those who need loving-kindness and compassion. The altruistic home-leaving environment helps me send love to many other people. It is also a force that opens up a new chapter of my life.





## Reasons for Becoming a Temporary Nun

*Thân Nghinh Lý (Thủy Đào)*



I was pregnant with my second daughter in 2019 and the whole pandemic and social chaos made my pregnancy harder than ever. As a result, I had gestational diabetes, which kept getting out of control. Having to poke my fingers four times for testing, three more pokes for insulin injections, plus complications during delivery in July 2020 gave me postpartum depression.

Since I joined the Compassionate Service Society (CSS) in Houston in 2014, I read stories about members who became temporary monks or nuns to dedicate their merits to their deceased parents and found them these stories very inspirational. Plus, they actually looked good without hair.

After moving to California, I had a chance to participate in the 2018 Mandala. I also met my previous Integral Taichi mentor, Ms. Tuong Van Tran who explained more and shared her experience of being a temporary nun, making the Altruistic Home-Leaving program inspiring and fascinating to me.



## Reasons for Becoming a Temporary Nun

In 2021, I had just got better with my depression for a few months when my mother in Vietnam passed away; this was another hard hit. During that time, Vietnam had another COVID outbreak. All foreign visitors would have to quarantine for at least 10 days, which made traveling back not a good idea for me. The images of all the CSS members who shaved their head and devoted 10 days to practice on behalf of their deceased family members/friends came clear to me. I checked out the CSS website and saw that Master Hang Truong started the program again after a two-year break due to the pandemic. Understanding my loss and my suffering, my spouse was very supportive and encouraging by volunteering to take care of our two little girls while I was gone. Therefore, I was able to attend the Altruistic Leaving-Home program for the first time in 2021.

After registration, I got a lot of help in getting myself ready for the course. During the course, I felt a great sense of gratitude while learning, meditating, and living with the sangha. I was thankful not only because of how scientific the program was designed in order for new comers like me to learn best, but also I had time for bonding and learning from other dharma brothers and sisters. The mutual and spiritual support from the sangha was very valuable for newcomers like me. I felt happier and stronger coming home to my family as a happy mother and wife and also knowing just what to do in order progress on my spiritual path.

I am determined to grow stronger on my spiritual path in order to share merits with all my loved ones and all those who need my support.







## The Cultivation of Compassion

*Thân Giác (Vân Anh)*

You may have heard about people leaving home for a short period of time to connect with the Buddhas. However, the Compassionate Service Society has a unique monastic program called Altruistic Short-Term Home-Leaving. In this program, the temporary monks/nuns vow to cultivate on others' behalf to gain the blessings necessary to overcome the tribulations of life. Dedicating yourself to this retreat will allow you to grow the great compassion that Buddhism teaches.

Although I cultivate at home every day and may feel close to the Buddha, I can only stay in his ashram when appearing as a nun. Because of this, I wish to be in the Sangha to live with the Buddha every year.

What touches my heart every time I go into altruistic ordination and participate in the Mandala is the unconditional love emanating from the Sangha's prayers. As the Sangha wholeheartedly turns to the living and the underworld beings to practice, everyone's sincerity and commitment always touch me.

When we are ordained, we wear plaques with the names of our loved ones and practice for them. We not only cultivate for our loved ones but for all sentient beings to help transform karma for ourselves and for our relatives. We prostrate, learn the Dharma, practice meditation, exercise, and rest with them daily. Many of us can't hold back our tears every morning when we prostrate ourselves in the serene ambiance of dawn and the beautiful sound of singing the Buddha's name. Bowing down, we return to our infancy without creating karma; standing up, we exude the characteristics of the Buddhas: truth, goodness, and beauty. By practicing compassion, we dissolve all the knots in our mind and the minds of the sentient beings with whom we cultivate.





## The Cultivation of Compassion

I feel as though the sincerity of cultivation directs visible and invisible sentient beings to coalesce with our minds. Sensing our seriousness allows them to open their hearts. This philosophy of cultivation for others emanates boundless compassion to all sentient beings and unlocks all entanglements from countless past lives. After days of meditation on the mountain, the Sangha attended the World Peace Gathering and the Mandala. In the Mandala, we took all the plaques through the five layers of skandhas to finally reach

the inner circle of liberation and rebirth in the ten directions of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. This process is a perfect journey to practice for all sentient beings, leading them toward the path of liberation.

I am profoundly grateful for the Altruistic Short-Term Home-Leaving program because I have the opportunity to return to the spiritual home. There is only one reality to which we embrace: boundless love and the network of compassion.





# 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).

## Altruistic Home-Leaving Reflections

*Thân Thanh (Hoàng-Tâm)*

So grateful to Thay for helping us open  
Both body and mind, like a lotus flower in the pond  
Rising up from the dark and muddy water  
Toward the calm blue sky forever  
For dharma study, kindness, compassion, giving,  
and forgiving practice  
Untying knots, letting go of all sufferings  
Sitting in meditation, visualizing the Four Lotuses  
Helping others attain peace and harmony  
Returning to the True Mind, the Buddha nature  
Weaving a web of lights, cultivating together  
Entering the wonderfully adorned Mandala  
Helping karmas and wandering souls get liberated  
And follow the lights of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

## 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

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

**The first lock of hair:** To honor and express deep gratitude for our parents.

**The second lock of hair:** To appreciate our spouse or significant others.

**The third lock of hair:** To transfer merits to family, relatives, and friends.

With each remaining lock of hair, we let go of afflictions for those with difficulties, pain, or loss.

# 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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COMPASSIONATE  
SERVICE SOCIETY

**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:**  
**[xgvt@compassheart.com](mailto:xgvt@compassheart.com)**

## XGVT REGIONAL COORDINATORS

- 1- California - Orange County  
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