

Prologue

When I was a high school student, my sister gave me a copy of *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran as a birthday present. My heart was truly inspired and stimulated by some of the wise words in it; for example: "It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding." These words have greatly changed my ways of thinking and acting ever since. I was awed to find the power of wisdom for the first time in my life. I have always looked forward to meeting someone as wise as Gibran.

After I grew up, I was lucky enough to study in the United Kingdom and the United States, and to travel extensively in Asia, Europe, America, and Africa. I met and learned from many people, but it was in my own fatherland of Taiwan that my dream of meeting someone as wise as Gibran finally came true. In 1991, I met Master Cheng Yen, a Buddhist nun and to me a true living prophet. After talking to her alone for about an hour, I was deeply moved by her amiable smile, soft voice, and above all her compassionate and loving heart, which made itself so apparent to all. I asked her to accept me as her disciple so that I could keep absorbing her wisdom, and she kindly granted my request. I have been inspired many times by her wise aphorisms and moved by her concrete practice of Buddha's teachings throughout the years.

In the Tzu Chi world, millions of people just like me are being moved and inspired by the Master. They engage in the Tzu Chi missions of charity, bone marrow donation and international relief, to name just a few. The Master's major beliefs in her spiritual formation are simple: pure great love and gratitude. "Great love" means that we put aside the "little love" for our own relatives or closest friends and instead show love and concern to all human beings without asking for anything in return. We feel grateful to the people that we help, and they in turn feel grateful to us. The Master successfully activates the great love hidden in people's hearts by promoting this cycle of positive reinforcement.

After reading through this photographic collection, you may have a better understanding about Tzu Chi and Master Cheng Yen herself. I want to point out that our members come from all religions, nationalities, and walks of life. If you identify yourself with Tzu Chi's ideals and goals, you are welcome to join us as we offer our help to the needy. As the Master says in her *Still Thoughts*, "There are two things that cannot wait: fulfilling filial piety and doing good deeds." We have included the directory of Tzu Chi offices worldwide in this book for your reference.

I am grateful to all the staff members in our Cultural Center Archives. Through their hard work in collecting and compiling all the photos and written materials in the Chinese edition of *Lotus Flower of the Heart*, we staff members in the Foreign Language Publications Department could compile the English version simply by translating and editing the necessary materials.

I am also grateful to Lin Sen-shou, Douglas Shaw and Chen Yi-ru, who did a wonderful job in translating, editing and designing this book. I am formidably impressed by their efforts.

Liu King-pong
Editor-in-Chief