

Name: Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom
Leader: Ven. Samu Sunim
Tradition: Zen
Locations: Chicago, Ann Arbor, Toronto, Mexico
URL: <http://www.zenbuddhisttemple.org/>

Career Opportunities after Ordination

When you complete the Maitreya Buddhist Seminary program and pass evaluations, you will be ordained as a junior priest or a junior Dharma teacher. A priest is a full-time resident in the monastic community fully supported by the order, while a Dharma teacher is a part-time teacher running his or her own center or affiliated with a local temple or center. If a Dharma teacher wants to become a full-time priest, he/she will be required to undergo a one-year internship as a full-time resident in the monastic community. In the Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom community, a monastic member is not required to remain celibate, provided that the member follow the Pure Standards and the Dharma schedule.

As a priest or Dharma teacher, you can run a local temple or center, perform weekly meditation services, and conduct classes and retreats. You can work as a social or community worker or serve as a chaplain in universities, colleges, hospitals and correctional institutions. You can even run an Internet ministry or edit and assist with the publication of Spring Wind. You can become a public speaker and lecturer on Buddhist and related topics. You can become an artist, musician or craftsman in order to promote Dharma art. You can teach Zen exercise, physical yoga, flower arrangement or tea ceremony. The opportunities are many according to your aptitude and abilities.

Maitreya Buddhist Seminary



Maitreya Buddhist Seminary is not an academic institution in the traditional sense. It does not have a campus nor does it provide a regular classroom-based education. What the Maitreya Buddhist Seminary program (MBS) offers is "practical education" based on a teacher-disciple relationship in which disciples can experience hands-on training (study-and-practice) in monastic or non-monastic situations while dealing with the realities of everyday life. It is designed for people who aspire to become Buddhist teachers without renouncing their worldly life pursuits, as well as for people who are willing to undertake full monastic training in an urban setting.

Why become a Dharma Teacher or Priest?

Ven. Samu Sunim started the seminary for two reasons. The first is the growing need in North America for qualified Buddhist clergy. We don't have enough, and while many stepping in to fill this void may have sincere hearts, they often lack the formal training needed to build a lasting Sangha with spiritual services that can be shared with the public. The second reason has to do with North American culture. While it is important to understand the Asian Buddhist tradition, there is an equal and critical need for teachers with North American culture in their bones, having lived it all of their life.

"People do not recognize that their own minds are the true Buddhas. They do not recognize that their own natures are the true dharma. They want to search for the dharma, yet they still look far away for holy ones. They want to search for the Buddha, yet they will not observe their own minds. If they aspire to the path of Buddhahood while obstinately holding to their feeling that the Buddha is outside the mind or the dharma is outside the nature, then, even though they pass through kalpas as numerous as dust motes, writing sutras with their own blood, never lying down to sleep, eating only one offering a day, or even studying through the entire tripitaka and cultivating all sorts of ascetic practices, it is like trying to make rice by boiling sandit will only add to their tribulation."

Application and Registration

Prior to registration, all applicants for MBS are required to do the Dharma Worker Program for the cultivation of a mindful attitude in everyday life for up to three months, or the Visitor's Program, in the case of non-local applicants, from one week to one month. The Dharma Worker Program is a weekend volunteer program at the Temple to learn and assist with Temple activities. Applicants are also required to take the Introductory Meditation Course in the five Tuesday or Thursday format or in the overnight format prior to registration, if they have not done so already. If you have not taken precepts, you are required to do so within the first year after your acceptance into the Seminary.

Study and Practice Year

MBS is a three to five-year program with two terms per year. The first term begins on January 15 and ends in early August. It is a 200-day practice period, Monday through Friday, with weekends off. The second term begins on September 5 and ends on December 15. It is a 100-day practice period, also Monday through Friday, with weekends off. There is a one month vacation in summer and a one month vacation in winter.

If you can complete the 300 days of practice period per year and pass the yearly requirements and assessments for three consecutive years, you can graduate with a Dharma degree and ordination certificate. If you can complete only 200 days of practice period a year due to time constraints, it will take you five years to graduate, provided that you meet the requirements and pass evaluations.

Study and Practice Program

Formal Morning and Evening Practice

All Dharma students carry on their formal morning and evening practice at home Monday through Friday. Dharma students must wake up early enough to do their full formal morning practice, which takes about one hour. Dharma students are advised to go outside after washing in order to limber up and then return inside for prostrations and morning practice. For evening formal practice, which takes approximately one-half hour, Dharma students are advised to practice immediately upon arriving from work before they do anything else such as having dinner. It would be best if Dharma students bathe and stretch to refresh themselves before beginning evening practice. Live-in Dharma students will follow the daily and weekly Temple schedule.

There is no formal practice schedule on weekends, but all Dharma students should set aside a minimum of three to four hours for their study program every weekend.

Informal Practice

All Dharma students are advised to do their informal Dharma practice in the midst of their daily lives whenever they can. It is said that practice in the midst of activities is superior to the practice in quiet and solitude. It goes without saying that your meditation and Buddhist practice will fail unless they can help you cope with your daily demands. Turn your work and workplace into a wonderful Dharma center for your mindful work. Use your breath, awareness and letting go practice in order to maintain your stability and enjoy peace of mind for your Dharma practice.

Keeping a Practice Journal

At the end of each day during the practice period, Monday through Friday, all Dharma students must keep their practice journal following the guidelines for journal entry. You can write your journal entry directly after evening practice if you choose. The guidelines for journal entry are:

1. List your formal morning and evening practice indicating maximum or minimum in numbers;
2. For your informal practice during the day time, reflect upon the following three points:
 1. What made you happy?

2. What troubled you most?
3. How much time did you waste in idle chit chat, worrying about things needlessly, getting angry or upset, or watching TV or videos?
3. Reflect on your Dharma student life of the day in a few sentences.

For second and third year students, you should write awakening of the day entry in no more than two sentences after the reflection.

Dharma Student Meetings

Every 25 days or so (always on Saturday), Dharma students get together at the Zen Buddhist Temples nearest them for joint Dharma student meetings and seminars. You should arrive by 7 p.m. Friday evening for ritual and devotional practice and stay overnight at the Temple. At 6 a.m. Saturday morning you wake up for meditation and the Dharma student meeting. After breakfast break, you attend a seminar. Dharma students who cannot attend the Dharma student meetings at the Temples, are required to email or fax their practice journals and hold Dharma student meetings by phone with their teacher.

Five Gates of Liberation

1. The Liberation Gate of Meditation Practice
2. The Liberation Gate of Doctrinal Study
3. The Liberation Gate of Rituals and Ceremonials
4. The Liberation Gate of Cultivation of Devotional Heart
5. The Liberation Gate of Cultivation of Wisdom Heart

The Liberation Gate of Meditation Practice

The first year novice student learns humility and how to enjoy peace of mind by focusing attention on the task at hand. The second year junior student takes the Advanced Meditation Course and learns to use the power of their unknowing mind for hwadu son practice and how to use the power of their concentration to cultivate boundless heart. The third year senior student learns how to make herself/himself available mindfully for public service and teaching. They learn to conduct public meditation and Dharma services and offer Introductory Meditation Courses and retreats.

The Liberation Gate of Doctrinal Study

The first year novice student studies the life of the Buddha, His great disciples and early canonical scriptures. They also study the visual art history of Buddhism, such as the iconography of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The second year junior student studies Prajnaparamita wisdom literature, such as the Heart Sutra and the Diamond Sutra, and the early history of Zen Buddhism and the Platform Sutra. The third year senior student studies the history of Korean Son (Zen Buddhism), Flower Ornament (Hua-yen) Sutra, and socially engaged Buddhism. At the end of each term, Dharma students are required to write an essay for their assignment.

Topics for Essay Assignments

First Year First Term:

- A. On the Life of the Buddha
- B. On the Dhammapada

First Year Second Term

- A. On the Ten Great Disciples of the Buddha
- B. On Novice Student Training
- C. On Breath Meditation

Second Year First Term

- A. On the Diamond Sutra
- B. On the Heart Sutra
- C. On Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana

Second Year Second Term

- A. On Buddhist Rituals & Ceremonials
- B. On Prajnaparamita/sunyata
- C. On Zen

Third Year First Term

- A. On Korean Zen
- B. On Korean Buddhism in the West
- C. On the Zen Buddhist Movement in the West

Third Year Second Term

- A. On Socially Engaged Buddhism
- B. On Buddhism in the West
- C. On Avatamsaka-zen

You can pick one of the topics and focus on a certain period or point in order to shed the light of your understanding and wisdom. For instance, you can decide to focus on the life of pre-enlightenment Buddha or post-enlightenment Buddha. If you decide to do your essay on the life of pre-enlightenment Buddha, for example, you can further narrow it down to the life of pre-enlightenment Buddha before renunciation or after renunciation, and so forth. The minimum requirement for your assignment is one essay per year. The essay length is 5 to 15 pages double-spaced.

In addition to completing the essay, Dharma students are required to give one oral presentation at the joint Dharma Student Meeting in July each year for evaluation purposes. Please consult the required and recommended reading list.

The Liberation Gate of Rituals and Ceremonials

The first year novice student learns by heart in a sing song voice the Great Compassion Dharani and Yebul for daily ritual practice, in addition to English chants such as the Heart Sutra and the Three Refuge formula. They also learn to do kido chanting to break open their voice for public service occasions. Furthermore, they learn about the use of ritual objects and musical instruments of daily use. The second year junior student learns to perform public meditation services, weddings, funerals and memorial services. They also learn purification ceremonies and repentance and forgiveness services. The third year senior student learns to perform Buddhist holiday ceremonials, home visits, and civic and religious ceremonies and functions. All students are trained under the guidance of qualified teachers and have to pass tests.

The Liberation Gate of Cultivation of Devotional Heart and Wisdom Heart

The cultivation of virtues is essential for the Dharma career of each student. In order to evaluate these two gates, Dharma students are advised to follow the triple heart practice. The first heart is a sincere heart. When Buddhists say that all sentient beings are Buddhas, the first proof is that each and every one of us is capable of manifesting a sincere heart, but often we neglect this potential. So Dharma students are urged to display their sincere heart, which is no other than their Buddha heart, through their Dharma student practice. The second heart is a good heart that is free from major defilements, such as hatred, ill feelings, and resentments. The third heart is a pure heart that can harmonize with all circumstances and respond to all situations without harmful effects.

Home Altar

All non-residential Dharma students are advised to set up a home altar and enshrine a seated or standing statue of Buddha Shakyamuni in any of the Earth-witness, Meditation, Wish-fulfilling, Reassurance or Teaching postures. If you cannot find or obtain a suitable statue of Buddha Shakyamuni for your altar, a painting or a bodhi leaf from Bodhgaya will serve the purpose. The height of the home altar should be between 100 cm (1 meter) and 175 cm depending on the size of your Buddha statue, and the size of the shrine room and ceiling height.

Altar furnishings should include an altar cloth, two candleholders, an incense burner and a water bowl. You are advised to make offerings of fruits, flowers or nuts and seeds once or twice a week. When you buy fruits or nuts and seeds, select the best quality and offer them on the altar. When you make bread or cakes, please offer them first on the altar.

A small sutra desk placed before the altar is ideal for your mokt'ak and sutras. Your mat and cushion can be placed in front of the sutra desk for prostrations and meditation. Keep your altar neat and tidy.

Evaluation and Advancement

There are maximum and minimum requirements for each year of Dharma student training. If you fail to meet the minimum requirements, you have to stay on until meeting them before advancing to the next level. Although you may meet the requirements of the first three gates of liberation, you may fail in the fourth and fifth liberation gates. If so, you may not be able to advance to the next level. By nature, the fourth and fifth liberation gates are more important than the first three liberation gates for obvious reasons. Therefore, Dharma students who aspire to become qualified Buddhist teachers in the West, must be prepared to pass through the spiritual gates of devotional heart and wisdom heart.

Tuition and Scholarship Opportunity

Tuition per term is \$700 (\$1400 per year). For full-time and low-income students, the fee is \$500 per term. There is a scholarship for live-in Dharma students who serve on the Temple staff. Those who would like to apply for the live-in Dharma student scholarship are asked to first participate in the Visitor's Program for two or three months. During this period you must pay for room and board and training. If the Temple director accepts you after the visitor's program, then the Temple will provide you with room and board, training and other necessities in exchange for your full-time service. In other words, the student serves on the Temple staff for their Maitreya Buddhist Seminary training. The third option is to participate in the visitor's program first, and then become a Temple resident who holds an outside job. These Temple residents pay for room and board, plus regular tuition.

Pure Standards for Dharma Students

1. Always remember that you are a direct descendent from Buddha Shakyamuni and the inheritor of His right Dharma. Do not fail to honor your teacher and serve your Dharma friends free from worldly thoughts.
2. The body-and-mind of a true Dharma student is the body of ultimate truth or Dharmakaya. Our original body-and-mind is a great liberated being untainted by defilements and the cycle of birth and death. Therefore, cultivate yourself, trusting that your original face is no other than the pure and perfect mind. It is a true Dharma student with an awakened heart who trusts in his/her original self and develops faith mind. Shake off inferior feelings and rise from self-conceit or self-pity with the knowledge that your own original mind is Buddha, and your faith firm in the Buddhist teachings of self-help.
3. Always cherish your beginner's mind. The purity and strong feeling of your first mind have the Dharma power to convert your difficulties and troubles into a valuable gift and joy.
4. Nothing fails to inspire and enlighten the true Dharma student. Please keep in mind that the harder the work and the more daunting the task you face, the better grist for your Dharma future.
5. Truthfulness and faithfulness are the virtues of being human. Purity of speech karma is the guiding light of your life of the three karmic deeds (body, thought and speech). Always speak the truth and be truthful like a mirror.
6. The bodhisattva workers of the Buddhist movement for the salvation of the world must learn the **Six Perfections** and **Four All-Embracing Virtues**, so that they are able to offer comfort and hope to those who are distressed and troubled, and love and joy to those who are sick and tired.

Six Paramita (Perfections)

- 1) May I be generous and helpful.
- 2) May I be pure and virtuous.
- 3) May I be patient. May I be able to bear and forbear the wrongs of others.
- 4) May I be strenuous, energetic and persevering.
- 5) May I practice meditation and attain concentration and oneness to serve all beings.
- 6) May I gain wisdom and be able to give the benefit of my wisdom to others.

Four All-Embracing Virtues

- 1) Giving and sharing,
- 2) Kind and friendly speech,
- 3) Conduct beneficial to others,
- 4) Selfless service to all.

7. The key to the Buddhist movement lies in the practice of love and compassion. It is easy to make mistakes and difficult to remain completely free from faults in the worldly life full of conflicts. Therefore, Dharma students should be willing to learn from their mistakes and misdeeds through moral discipline and repentance practice. True and sincere repentance practice helps develop a compassionate heart towards the wrongs of others. Through your own mistakes and misdeeds, you learn to understand, forgive and love your fellow beings of the world. Repent, love and be happy! You will discover the path to a Big Happiness - that helping yourself is helping others and helping others is helping yourself.

Everyday Admonition for Dharma Students

1. Please perform your formal morning practice faithfully Monday through Friday. Your morning practice is the place of your awakening that you are the living embodiment of the Buddha through your response to the Buddha Shakyamuni and spiritual communion with His tradition of wisdom and compassion. Always begin your day cheerfully with your morning practice and examine yourself before you retire and give thanks to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the day. (Yebul)
2. Follow your weekly Dharma schedule, be fully accountable for your duties and do your utmost. (Sense of Duty)
3. Enlightenment and truth are always before your eyes and within your reach. Enlightenment is the pure and sincere heart of practice itself, and the truth is the spirit of practice that all sentient beings are Buddha. Accordingly, there is no enlightenment or truth apart from the common ordinary person and the everyday task. You should know that it is delusion to run around looking for truth and enlightenment, and to seek or anticipate them from the outside. Let go of your delusion. The mind of the Dharma student should be one of fortitude with the faith and power of the Bodhisattva Vow and free from fear, angst and worries. So keep your mind in alignment everyday. (Life of No Delusion)
4. Repent, seek forgiveness and restore yourself right away if you caused trouble to others, committed wrongdoings or made blunders through carelessness and inattention. Keep your mind free from guilt and remorse through sincere repentance and avoid retribution such as hatred and enmity. Constant repentance is constant awakening. (Repentance)
5. The body-and-mind of the Dharma student should be poor and pure. Care for goods and articles. They are the properties of the Three Jewels. Use them clean and sparingly so that they last. Recycle them when they are no longer useful. Clean utensils and implements after use and put them where they belong. Try to manage with less or loss, if possible, but be generous and helpful to others as much as possible. (Hidden Virtue)
6. Always keep your dwelling and environment clean and tidy. To take good care of your dwelling place and temple environment is to take good care of the body-and-mind of your Dharma student training. To take good care of the body-and-mind of your Dharma student training (purity of heart) is to transform this world into the land of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Cleaning and keeping our environment free from pollution is the Pure Land movement. Be on your guard and diligent. (Environmental Movement)
7. It is conduct unbecoming to a Dharma student to pick on others and blame them in order to build a self-defense or reinforce one's position. It is the downfall of a Dharma student to become jealous of the other people's prosperity and gloat over others' misfortunes. If such a feeling or thought arises you should perform prostrations right away and surrender your weakness, and renew your Bodhisattva vows and pray for the happiness of all beings. (Renewal and Kido)
8. All Dharma students should be happy and energetic Buddhists ready to lend a helping hand. (Three Stars)