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30th Anniversary Celebration of

Chan in America

"Rising Compassion"

The Chan Meditation Center (CMC) was founded in 1978 by The Most Venerable Master Sheng Yen with a simple purpose of sharing Chinese Chan (Zen) Buddhism with the western world. The center was launched with a simple program of beginner's meditation classes, and, now expanded its programs to offer various types of classes, services, meditation, workshops, outreach activities and a weekly TV program that has been broadcasting in the tri-state area for almost a decade. In 30 years, it has evolved from a handful of local members under a guiding teacher to a multi-cultural community, made up of monastic members and lay followers, engaging in Buddhist practice not only to bring real change to our minds, but its resulting genuine change in action through communal practice, peace building work and interfaith dialogues.

2008 marks an important milestone for the Center. The theme of this milestone celebration is "Rising Compassion." The Buddha said, "*Compassion is that which makes the heart of the good move at the pain of others. It alleviates the pain of others; thus, it is called compassion. It is called compassion because it shelters and embraces the distressed.*" Master Sheng Yen also said, when you see the vexation and suffering that torment others, and through helping them resolve their problems and end their suffering, you become less self-centered and less vexed with your own problems. Throughout the process, our innate compassion and wisdom gradually develop. With great compassion, we can treat and care for our family, friends, society and all ethnic groups equitably. If we can achieve this, the world will be at peace.

In this whole day event, we would like to use an innovative approach - *World Café: Conversations that Matter*, to aid us in building the center's future together. *World Café* is a process that applies a focused use of dialogue to foster productive relationships, collaborative learning, and collective insight. Rather than playing the role of a spectator, everyone participates and contributes in an open and sincere way through deep listening and exploring questions that matter. As we engage in small group conversations, we draw closer to each other and a sense of heartfelt connection will emerge. This connection become more solid as different views are accepted and interwoven into a meaningful whole. In this dynamic and interactive process, a momentum will build up to bring forth a strong group spirit and coherence. We hope this activity will breathe new life and hope to the center and continue to honor the spirit of Master Sheng Yen's teachings and vision. Drawing from this synergy of collective creativity, we can shape the future of CMC together.

Moreover, we would like this celebration to be an earnest invitation to everyone, who shares our vision, to join us in the cultivation of inner peace and bringing harmony to the world.