

A New Year's Message from Venerable Kyongsan, Prime Dharma Master of Won-Buddhism

The Way of the Leader

January 1, 2012, *Won-Buddhist* Year 97

We welcome the new year with hope. In this the 97th year of the *Won-Buddhist* Era, I sincerely pray with all my heart that the great protection and grace of Dharmakaya Buddha, the Fourfold Grace, be with the *Won-Buddhist* family, as well as all humankind and all sentient beings.

In this new year, I encourage your daily practice. May you make great buddha offerings for the sharing of the *Won-Buddhist* dharma in the world. May your own spiritual development continue, and may it reach perfection. And may the minds and hearts of all *Won-Buddhists* become as one as we prepare for our 100th anniversary, a sacred and holy event.

This is also a year when new world leaders from many countries will be elected. This includes the leaders of South Korea and the *Won-Buddhist* Order. Because the world is evolving into one global community, the role of the leader has become more important than in the past. Yet the qualities and capacities that a leader needs are not developed over night, but over a long period. That is why I encourage all *Won-Buddhist* members, lay and ordained, to strive for the character and virtues of a leader, each in our own positions, by following the teachings of the Founding Master Sotaesan as written in "The Essential Dharmas for preparation as leaders," in *The Principal Book of Won-Buddhism*.

First, a leader should possess the "wisdom eye."

Sotaesan counseled that leaders should be more knowledgeable than those they lead. Leaders should be able to assess the mood of the people, and what changes they eagerly await. They should have the wisdom and the capacity to embrace other people's wisdom, and also be able to direct people, as well as world events. Their wisdom should include the ability to gather information from all sources, to sift through it, separate the true from the false, and make sound decisions based on correct judgment. If a leader sees reality this way and is open to the future, people will feel satisfied, and the world will become more peaceful. Finally, the world will

become a vast and immeasurable paradise when leaders inquire deeply into, and are awakened to, the teachings of the saints and sages, which is the light of humankind's wisdom, and when they master the operating principles of the universe.

Second, leaders should possess the zeal of public spirit. Their enthusiasm should be as a flame that heats all around it, and they should conduct their leadership with a great sense of duty that engages the public in the pursuit of public happiness. To accomplish this, leaders must have passion—passion to devote all of their ability into their accomplishments.

Also, leaders should be careful and mindful to maintain the proper balance between the public good and the self-interest of only certain individuals. They should avoid personal and selfish interests by pursuing the interests of all people. Leaders should pay extreme attention to this proper balance. For if they do, then leaders in the bright era will arise as great masters of the world able to lead the world by adhering to the standard of being one with the public, and to act in a way that is utterly impartial and selfless.

Third, leaders should possess an honesty that gains the trust of people.

The confidence that leaders are given by the public depends on the following: the extent to which their words and deeds correspond; the purity of their honesty and morality; how well they care for the public; and how well they build their character with endurance and self restraint. In this way, when leaders nurture their own character based on morality, they can earn the public's trust.

It is said that the minds and hearts of the public is the mind and heart of the heavens. When leaders keep this trust with their actions, our societies will grow more honest, and the minds of people and heaven will naturally follow these leaders. They are the light and the hope of any society where people live together. All sentient beings walk together toward the light. For this reason, the wisdom eye of a leader is crucial. Under a wise leader, public spirit will be greatly cultivated and people will be guided to have the courage to work through any difficulties.

These three virtues of a leader are not only for leaders of nations or large enterprises; they are virtues that all of us should possess, whatever our walk of life, and wherever we live.