

정신개벽으로 낙원세계를 건설합시다.

Let us build paradise in this world with a Great Opening of Spirit.

A hopeful new year has come. I pray in my heart that the grace and the light of Dharmakāya Buddha, the Fourfold Grace, be together with all sentient beings, all human beings, all members, practitioners and their families.

As we reflect on the past year, we recall many painful events in our global village, with every kind of dispute and war as well as natural disasters. The energy of the world, however, is moving toward the era of mutual harmony and peace. In countries all over the world, people are negotiating peace and reconciliation, as in the case of South Korea, in its relations with North Korea.

The Founding Master of *Won*-Buddhism, Sotaesan, proclaimed "With this Great Opening of the material, let there be a Great Opening of spirit," His vision was to build a truly civilized world for humankind through a Great Opening of Spirit. Our mission is to establish paradise in this world, where we and all living beings live harmoniously together, and where we all make good and wise use of material and scientific advancement. Today, greeting a new year, I would like to share three things that we can do in order to turn this world into a paradise.

First, let us cultivate the power of self-reliance in our spirit. We all have the intact, complete, and whole true spirit. We want to look into this clear, pure spirit, and cultivate it. Today, we human beings are living in suffering. As we seek to have more abundance and convenience in material things, we are losing the power of spirit. We find ourselves in the swamp of desire and agony as we seek to have more of everything. To leave this swamp of distraction and unhappiness we have to cultivate the power of independence in our spirit, so that with our true, self-reliant spirit we are in control.

We can cultivate our independent spirit by restoring our wholesome nature, by practicing one focused mind and deep meditation. These will lead us to a life of paradise. This is the life of buddhas and bodhisattvas: being awake, independent, whole, and complete as we constantly cultivate the independent true spirit.

Second, let us cultivate the wisdom to utilize well the material and scientific advancement. Today, our global village is endangered because of the disturbance to ecosystems, natural disasters, and negligence of nature and life. These problems are caused by the blind seeking of

material development.

To overcome this crisis, we need to cultivate wisdom on how to use the material and scientific advancement mindfully. As individuals, we should practice our sound spirit to be the masters of mind and body, giving priority to moral and spiritual values rather than to material gains. If we are in leadership roles in the field of science, we should discern wisely what mankind needs to develop in the industrial and scientific area and what we need to leave up to nature. In this way, we will all strive to cultivate material civilization and recent scientific advancement for a far-sighted and truthful contribution to all human beings.

Third, let us play a main role in the cultivation of peace. Today, we as individuals and nations have become more selfish as we pursue economic gain, and as we seek greater wealth and a greater abundance of material possessions. The gap between the haves and the have-nots therefore becomes bigger. As conflicts become severe, tragic histories are unfolding, with enmities, fighting, and war. To overcome these conflicts, it is essential for us to follow the altruistic Mahayana practice, that is, the compassionate practice of Bodhisattva. With this practice, true peace will be with us.

As we bestow happiness on others, we receive blessings. As we give harm to others, harm returns to us. This is the principle of karmic cause and effect. Let us be aware of this truth of cause and effect and be more considerate and take care of others and other countries who are in the weaker positions. This is the great way to make the world at peace. Even when we encounter someone who challenges us in our life, we should try to find something that we can learn and appreciate. So we cultivate gratitude and peace toward each other. Let us practice mutual benefit and the Middle Way. This is how we can play a major role in establishing mutual harmony and peace.

At this New Year, let us all cultivate these three things: cultivate the power of self-reliance in our spirit, cultivate the wisdom to utilize well material and scientific advancement, and take an active role in cultivating peace. These are the great ways to spread dharma and open up the doors of blessings and happiness of mankind in the world.

January 1, 2008, *Won*-Buddhist Year 93

Venerable Kyongsan

Head Dharma Master of *Won*-Buddhism