

Venerable Dr. Yifa

Chair of Department of Religious Studies The University of the West, USA

Venerable Dr. Yifa has been a nun at Fo Guang Shan Monastery in Taiwan since 1979. She received a law degree from National Taiwan University, a MA in comparative philosophy from University of Hawaii and her Ph.D. in religious studies from Yale University in 1996. She is the recipient of various awards-- “the Ten Outstanding Young Persons” in Taiwan in 1997 and “Outstanding Women in Buddhism Award” by UN in Bangkok in 2003 and “Juliet Hollister Award” for Interfaith and Peace Work in 2006. She has been the Dean at Fo Guang Shan Buddhist College and the Provost at Hsi Lai University, Rosemead, California, a visiting scholar at the University of California at Berkeley and Harvard University, a lecturer at Boston University and a faculty member at National Sun Yat-Sen University in Taiwan. She taught at McGill University as the Numata visiting professor in the spring of 2005 and currently serves as the chair of Department of Religious Studies at the University of the West in Los Angeles.

Yifa has been conducting the annual Humanistic Buddhist Monastic Life Programs providing college students and teenagers from all over the world to have the first hand experience with spiritual practice. Working with a group of graduate students, she is now directing the Sutra Pagoda Project which is undertaking on the translation and research of Chinese Buddhist scriptures.

For these years Yifa has been engaged in interfaith dialogues: such as Gethsemani Encounter, International Buddhist-Christian Theological Encounter, Synthesis Dialogue with the Dalai Lama, Council for the Parliament of World Religions; some of occasions are supported by UNESCO; and was a contributor to “Safe Motherhood Project” by UNICEF in South Asia Office. She has been the co-chair/ co-organizer of “Nuns in the West,” a dialogue between Catholic and Buddhist nuns.

Yifa is a frequent guest lecturer on diverse subjects, including Chinese Buddhist philosophy, thanatology and ethics. Her current research focuses on “Buddhist Monasticism” and “Women in Buddhism”. She is the author of *The Origin of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China*, by Hawaii University Press and *Safeguarding the Heart: a Buddhist Response to Suffering and September 11*, by Lantern Books, NY; and co-author of *Benedict’s Dharma: Buddhists Reflect on the Rule of Saint Benedict*, by Riverhead, NY.