

Greetings to the Most Venerable, _____, and _____ monks and nuns
Greetings to our visitors, spiritual leaders, and Vietnamese community representatives
Greetings to our friend Ian Green and all of our fellow countrymen and coreligionists that are gathered here today.

Greetings to you all,

Today, the world is no longer unfamiliar with the Buddha's teachings of unattachment and enlightenment. On the eve of humanity's third millenium, the United Nations honored Buddhist thought as a Way of Peace that can bring happiness and serenity to any person, society or nation that receives and practices the way of Buddhism.

This means that, insomuch as the individual intersects with and influences the the community of man, we can achieve peace for our planet only when each one of us acts in the spirit of non-violence and serenity of mind. And in order to achieve this, the Dharma has demonstrated that each one of us must transform our most basic urges into higher states of mind: ambition into contentedness, anger into compassionate forgiveness, and illusion into clear-sightedness.

Once we have accomplished this, once our mind is truly at peace, we see peace around us and we will carry peace with us wherever we go and to whomever we meet. In this way, all Buddhas, whether made of jade, wood, stone, drawn on paper or even clumsily molded out of clay by children's hands, are all symbols of peace and serenity.

However, once such a symbol has been installed in a particular place, it can radiate its atmosphere of peace only to the people of that place. Its influence is limited, whereas our world today, so full of strife, crisis and change, desperately needs a universal symbol of peace, of the Dharma. We need a symbol that can act as the focal point for the faith of millions of people worldwide, that can be a starting point for the Buddhist virtues of empathy, compassion and peace to glow and spread to all humanity. This is why our fellow Buddhists Ian and Judy Green, with the guidance of the Lama Zopa Rinpoche in Australia, took it upon themselves to create this two and a half meter tall, four ton, jade statue of the Buddha named the "Jade Buddha of Universal Peace" and take it on tour across continents.

Since its completion in December 2008, the Jade Buddha has quickly been recognized not only as a sacred symbol of the Buddha that transcends nations, but also as a marvel of modern Buddhist art. Our friends of other religions as well as our co-religionists, of all languages and cultures, have hailed this statue as a symbol of not only Truth and Peace, but also of Beauty.

Today, after many months of waiting, we gather here to make offerings to the Jade Buddha and officially begin the Festival of the Jade Buddha. The statue will remain here for the next ten days, during which time we will gather to meditate and pray for an end to war and disaster and for true peace and happiness. We would like to emphasize that the purpose of our program of meditation and prayer before this solemn symbol, the Jade Buddha of Universal Peace, is for each one of us to practice the Buddha's teaching that, if only we transform our minds to be truly peaceful and aware, we can transform our world in the same way.

We now turn to the statue, with unshakeable faith in the eternal truth of the Dharma, and begin the festival of the Jade Buddha of Universal Peace today.

Thank you.