

**Dharma Espresso – Hurricane Irma**

Dear everyone,

Page | 1

Yesterday, Irma, a hurricane of Category 5 which was even stronger than hurricane Harvey, went through the island of Barbuda, destroyed 90% of the houses, and killed many people. Irma is now on the past to make landfall in Florida, and probably will cause even worse damage. A hurricane of Category 5 is deadly. However, Hurricane Harvey was still the worst one in the past thousand years. Wherever we are, we should continue to work with CSS Houston to help our members there first, and then reach out to help others. It is best if we can give financial support; if not, make time to pray to the Almighty for the victims there to have the best of luck in rebuilding their lives and homes.

As you may know, many disasters are happening in our world, bringing suffering to all and making us feel hopeless. Consequently, we should feel humble and always be proactive, initiating charity work and being clear about each step of our plan. We should contribute our time, labor, and money, no matter how little. In the past, the Buddha used to say a sentence which is very important in our life: "Things happening in a large-scale are joint karma." They are events impossible for only one person to have sowed the seeds. They must have been generated by a community. Sowing those seeds or creating those causes is a big problem.

Usually, pollution caused by humans changes the atmosphere which may result in hurricanes. For human beings, that change is often called repentance. We usually use the word repentance for unwholesome acts. Actually, when we repent, we want to change, not to repeat bad things of the past. We realize we did wrong things then, so now we want to renew ourselves. Oftentimes, we focus too much on past mistakes instead of turning to a more positive and beautiful future. Understanding this, we will realize how wonderful Buddhism is: always looking to the future. Very often, we might have felt exhausted when we practiced repentance bowing because we thought too much about the past and kept asking ourselves, the Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas for forgiveness. We forgot that all repentance ceremonies actually aim for us to look forward to the future in a more positive way. Mistakes have been made; only with sincere mind can we improve our life. Therefore, every time we do repentance ceremonies such as Amitabha Repentance or Kuan Yin Repentance, etc., we always aim for the future. We should think of how we can radiate light to everyone's heart in the future. We should look back at our true nature and realize that we are the light, the boundless light. We have made mistakes because we were covered by dark clouds. Now we continue to affirm that we are the light to move on, and to transcend. Clouds can only cover the sun temporarily. They cannot make the sun disappear. We are the sun, the limitless light. Like hurricanes come and go; they never stay forever.

Similar to darkness or dark clouds covering the sun, many times they create much damage and suffering, then comes the important process of rebuilding. Our focus should be not only on the damage but also on the recovery. Therefore, the hexagram number 24 for recovery in I-Ching (*The Book of Changes*) is very important in our life. This hexagram consists of an inner trigram for thunder, an outer trigram for earth, and a long line for recovery. The short lines are *yin* and the long bottom line is *yang* to begin anew, a very important concept. When looking back at all disastrous events from hurricanes to our own difficulties and problems, we should not get stuck in them, but should think of our ability to renew ourselves. The ability to do good is very important. We should encourage each other to renew ourselves and change

our joint karma, the karma of a whole community. Sometimes we change ourselves but don't want to make others change.

I really hope that you will invite your friends and loved ones to attend our CSS year-end World Peace Gathering (WPG) called Amitabha Dharma Assembly. Why such earnest hope? Because when we bring forth our Bodhi mind together, 1 plus 1 equals not 2 but 100. Similarly, it is not enough for each of us alone to do good; we should appeal to everyone to do good. It is not enough for each of us alone to repent. We need to get everyone to join us to create a joint force, a group field of energy so we can change more. This is the reason why we need not only to change ourselves but also to be the motivating energy for everyone to have the opportunity to transcend.

Page | 2

Thank you for listening to today's Dharma Espresso.

Dharma Master Heng Chang

(Translated and transcribed by Compassionate Service Society)

(Side note: our translator was on the plane from SNA to Houston)