

## INKA CEREMONY FOR

# Myong Hae Sunim

April 28, 2016 at Su Bong Zen Monastery, Hong Kong

### DHARMA COMBAT

**Won Bo Sunim:** You and I come from Lithuania, but sometimes Lithuanians don't like to be taught. So how can you teach Lithuanian people?

**Myong Hae Sunim:** *[Gets up and hugs Won Bo Sunim.]*  
Thank you for coming.

**Sam Yin Sunim:** These few days there are so many guests, and I am so nervous about what to cook for them, that I forgot my small kasa in Gak Su. Originally my mind was complete, but now I don't have this small kasa so my mind is not complete. How can you calm my mind?

**MHSN:** *[Takes off her own small kasa and gives it to Sam Yin Sunim.]*

**SYSN:** Thank you.

**Question:** Soon you become JDPSN. I want to ask you, what you will teach us?

**MHSN:** What color is the floor?

**Q:** The floor is brown, but Sifu already taught us that. What else will you teach us?

**MHSN:** Keep this mind.

### DHARMA SPEECH

*[Raises the Zen stick over her head, then hits the table with the stick.]*

In opposites you can find your true self. And your true self includes all opposites.

*[Raises the Zen stick over her head, then hits the table with the stick.]*

But here there are no opposites and also no true self.

*[Raises the Zen stick over her head, then hits the table with the stick.]*

Opposites are only opposites, true self is only true self.

Which one of these statements is correct?

KATZ!

Many smiling faces in front of me.

I was born in a beautiful country, Lithuania. I had no understanding about religions. Even Christianity was suppressed by the government during the Soviet period. In those



Photo: May Lam

days, God was called a “game” for old people. But despite this bad situation in 1991 after Lithuania became independent, I was fortunate to encounter Zen Master Seung Sahn’s teaching: Zen means understanding your true self. What am I?

As a little girl I had a question, “Why are we here? Why is it that there is so much good and bad here?” My grandmother told me that God made everything, and that if I practiced hard, I could ask God about anything. But no matter how hard I practiced the rosary for three hours a day, God never talked to me. One morning I was so sad. Why wouldn’t God talk to me? And then, suddenly I completely let go. I looked up at the blue sky and I became the sky. All good and bad disappeared, and everything was clear, just as it was. Everything was God. I was overwhelmed with joy. After that time, I wanted to become a nun so that I could help this world. I was looking for some monasteries in Lithuania, but I could not find one.

Then, one day, my friend called me and said, “I heard that a Chinese Zen master is going to give a talk. Will you go with me?” So I went to see what this Zen master looked like. That teacher was Zen Master Su Bong. His talk was so inspiring that I joined the three-day retreat the next day.

After the retreat, my friend and I could not make a decision about taking Buddhist precepts. After all, we were going to become Catholic nuns. But we finally made a decision and rushed to the airport at 5 a.m. so that we could find Su Bong Sunim before he left. He gave us the five precepts right there in the airport coffee shop. (Dae Bong Sunim was there too!)

Later, my friend did become a Catholic nun, and she still follows that path. But I realized that my home was with the Kwan Um School of Zen, and that the path of a Zen nun fit me better, like clothes my own size. But, to become a nun, I needed to go to Korea and train there. I worked very hard and got enough money for the plane ticket, and in 1995 I applied to attend winter Kyol Che at Shin Won Sa Temple. Unfortunately, the retreat was already full. I was discouraged and felt like there

were too many obstacles. But I got a postcard from Korea written by Zen Master Su Bong. I was really surprised because Zen Master Su Bong had passed away almost two years before! But thanks to Zen Master Bon Yeon (Jane Dobisz), who had found the postcard among Su Bong Sunim's possessions and sent it to me, Zen Master Su Bong was teaching me long after his death.

Su Bong Sunim's commitment inspired me to keep trying. After the three-month Kyol Che in Warsaw I went to Hwa Gye Sa Temple, where I did my haeng-ja training. I am deeply grateful to Zen Master Dae Bong for helping me become a nun. Soon after I ordained, Zen Master Seung Sahn asked me to go to Hong Kong and help Zen Master Dae Kwan (Sifu) at Su Bong Zen Monastery. Thanks to his guidance, I found a home with the Hong Kong sangha. And I am especially grateful to Sifu for teaching me for almost 20 years. She provides a clear mirror so I can see myself. Her kindness and clear direction has helped me go through many difficulties. Thank you to my dharma sisters (fellow sunims) and all sangha all over the world for practicing together.

Last year I participated in winter Kyol Che at the Providence Zen Center in the United States. I had a chance to practice with different teachers in our school. I am grateful to Zen Master Soeng Hyang and all the other Kwan Um School teachers who have guided and encouraged me, and helped me to see myself more clearly.

During the retreat, one teacher asked me a question: "Are you willing to lie about anything?"

I didn't know how to answer. If I answered yes, then it would be clear that I am a liar and not a trustworthy person. If I said no, then I would also be lying. After all, wouldn't I be willing to lie if it would save someone's life? I got stuck—really stuck. This question about lying wouldn't leave me. It would appear at any time and in any place. Even at night I would jump up in my bed with this question.

But as you know, we live in this world of opposites and very often we get lost in the opposites. We have like and dislike, inside and outside, and we end up fighting with the world. The question "Are you willing to lie about anything?" was so strong that everything else started to disappear. I sometimes lost any sense of time and space, but at the same time every moment became very clear. The sound of the moktak, each syllable of chanting, every taste and touch, every color—everything became very clear and sharp.

The question helped me come back to each moment. I began to ask, "What I am doing right now? What is this?" It became easier to let go of attachment to opposites: good and bad, right and wrong, like and dislike, you and me, us and them. I noticed that I have a choice how I respond in each

moment and not just be controlled by opposites.

Recently I heard a story about two wolves. In this story, a grandfather was teaching his grandchildren about life. He said to them, "A fight is going on inside me. It is a terrible fight between two wolves. One wolf expresses fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, hatefulness and lies. The other wolf expresses joy, peace, love, hope, humbleness, kindness, friendship, generosity, faith and truth. These wolves are always fighting with each other. My grandchildren, this same fight is going on inside of you. And not just you, but inside every other person too."

The children thought about it for a minute. Then one child asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win the fight?" The grandfather replied, "The one you feed will win."

So which wolf do we choose to feed? Do you see that we have a choice? If we cling to our anger, how can we let go of it and feed instead the wolf of kindness and understanding?

The only way we can choose wisely is to come to the place before anger and kindness. In our Zen school we call that place "before thinking." And then we return to moment-mind. Remember that you have a choice which wolf you feed.

When you are fully alive in each moment, then the two wolves of opposites completely disappear. When we do anything 100 percent, then opposites disappear. Then our correct situation, correct relationship and correct function become clear. And then we can really help this world.

So I sincerely hope that we will all continue to practice together and return, over and over, to our true self, that is before thinking. Correctly use all opposites to save all beings from suffering.

Now I have a question for you: How can you do that?

KATZ!

After the ceremony let's take a group photo.

Thank you for coming tonight. ♦

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Myong Hae Sunim is the first Buddhist nun from Lithuania, where she heard of Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching for the first time in 1991. She sat her first retreat with Zen Master Su Bong when he visited Lithuania in 1993. Myong Hae Sunim moved to Hwa Gye Sa Temple in South Korea in 1996 to train as a haeng-ja. She moved to Hong Kong after becoming a nun in 1997 to train under Zen Master Dae Kwan. Myong Hae Sunim has been in Hong Kong since 1997 and has served as head nun and vice abbot of Su Bong Zen Monastery. She has sat many retreats across Asia, Europe and the United States. Myong Hae Sunim is now the second guiding teacher at the Su Bong Zen Monastery.