

29-08-11

Note:

Translated from Thai to English by a friend of the Gift of Happiness Foundation...

From Wat Worakit

“City people often have spare or left-over items of food or other things in their homes. These have considerable value for children who never get to use “money”, not even 1 baht” These words are said with suppressed anger by the venerable monk teacher Wuthithamatorn, the abbot of Wat Worakit, a temple in Ampur Pamoke in Angtong Province.

All the time, people enter the temple to make merit or find peace of mind, but at this wat in Pamoke, which is a small and not very well known temple, several hundred children are fostered here. We believe that our wat is a haven supporting the lives of our people and providing a location where they can stay that is ideal for needy families who have no-one to care for them.

The venerable monk teacher Wuthithamatorn, the abbot of Wat Worakit, told us about the past history of the temple as follows: About 30 years ago, a group of Rangers brought more than 30 children to the abbot, requesting that they be able to stay and be looked after there. They also provided 500 baht per month to help support them. The children were mostly orphans; their parents had belonged to a communist group which had been wiped out. So the children came beseeching the abbot to receive them into his grace and allow them to stay at the wat where they could live in safety.

“Later on, the northern hill tribes, that are very poor indeed, heard this story and sent their children to live at the wat as well. They told us it was better than starving to death in the mountains. Consequently, more and more came, some from other provinces until there were more than 400 children needing care. I can remember some of their names, some I cannot. Some are mischievous or naughty, but I look after them and don’t let them quarrel. If they argue, I never ask who is right or who is wrong, but will punish both of them. Children often misbehave; that is the way of children” the venerable father said with a wry smile indicating his fondness for the children.

He went on to say that around the temple they have schools set up where the children can study. These are regular schools for each child ranging from kindergarten up to high school Year 6. However, with so many children to cater for, they must go begging for food, so that each teaching facility is able to feed their pupils. Some of the teachers who work in the schools receive a monthly salary from government welfare knowing that the salary will not increase, but they are willing to make this sacrifice for the children.

“Every day now, the only problem faced by the monks is fear about their ability to find enough food for the children to eat. It is a never ending problem and causes them a lot of worry. Some of those that finish their studies will come back to help, but others do not have the courage to come back. They are probably a little ashamed of themselves for not helping the temple, especially as the expenses build up. For example, the electricity bill is never less than 30,000 baht. The income from donations mostly comes from begging for the basics of life. We receive uncooked rice and dried food, although sometimes there is insufficient rice and we have to borrow some from the rice mill. When the monks’ robes are delivered to the wat, we must pay for them; but if we don’t have enough money then they do not ask for repayment, but consider it as a donation to make merit” the venerable father said.

.....right now, many people pray for their own prosperity. Some play at it and others follow the accepted ways, throwing their money around however they like, but in this small wat we continue to look after children who have no concept of “money” and who have not experienced the touch or feel of “money”, the very thing that is so vital in determining if they will be able to eat or have decent clothes to wear.

“People keep old things at home, but for children who lack opportunity, those things would be new to them and it is an act of kindness if they can receive them. We often tell the children that if there is no-one to help us, we must find new people to come to assist us, because there are not many Buddhist families who come here and donate money to make merit month after month. We do not hope for much more than that. Most people, who come to make donations, do so on their own initiative or after hearing about us through word-of-mouth. The wat never advertises in any way. The things that we would like to receive as donations are clothes, toys or anything that can be brought here such as dried food. If you have anything surplus to your needs and really don't have any use for it, please bring it here and give it to us.”

I can honestly say that every word he says, every breath that the venerable monk teacher Wuthithamatorn takes, is always mindful of the small beings in his constant care.

“Eating is an important part of life that is a priority here. Children must eat so that they have the energy to study. In any case, they must get nutrition on a daily basis. Our one fear is that in the days to come there will not be enough food to go around” the venerable father says with some remorse. He also confides that: “Moreover, the parents who are able to raise their children, by the time they grow up, they will ultimately face many of life's difficulties, although they will still have prospects and opportunities. Please do not think in a short-sighted way; they still have to fight on through life.”

Everything and anything that you have lying around and are considering throwing out as rubbish, but, on the other hand, you think could be eaten or be useful to sustain life in some small way beyond the next few days, please save it for us.

If you want to make a donation...

Please send to the Gift of Happiness Foundation who will use your money to buy food for the children.
<http://www.gohappiness.org/donate.html>

If you have no money, please send anything you can to help.

Gift of Happiness Foundation can collect goods in Bangkok. Contact by email. Or you can drop-off at the foundation's office.

Gift of Happiness Foundation details...

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