

A Collection of Retreat Discourses by Father Cheng, Jue-Ming¹



Foreword

Life today can feel fast, noisy, and overwhelming.

We are constantly surrounded by information, expectations, and different voices telling us what matters. Yet, in the middle of all this, we rarely take time to pause and ask ourselves:

Why am I here? What is the meaning of my life? Where am I going?

Deep within each of us is a desire for something more, a life that is meaningful, centered, and true. We long to become the person we are meant to be.

This retreat is an invitation to begin that journey.

- Take time to slow down.
- Enter into silence.
- Open your heart to the truth that God desires to reveal to you.

As you reflect, notice how faith is not separate from your life, but deeply connected to your daily experiences, your culture, and the world around you.

When we discover the true center of our lives, when we encounter God personally, life is no longer empty or directionless. Instead, it becomes filled with **purpose, clarity, and inner strength**.

- This is a journey of discovery.
- A journey of truth.
- A journey toward the life you are truly called to live.

Let us begin.

¹ Fr. Cheng Jue-Ming, S.J. (Jan 13, 1914 – June 11, 1964), was a Jesuit priest. This book is a compilation of the conferences he delivered over the course of a five-day retreat (February 16–21, 1964) for more than sixty college students at Jingshan Retreat Center in Changhua, Taiwan, just a few months before his death. Although he was already in the terminal stage of cancer, he spoke with great urgency, calling out in the spirit of “a great wind rising” to rally young people to follow Christ, transform the world, and live out the spirit of Christ’s love.



Talk One: “The Great Wind Rises”

You worked hard and traveled a long distance to come here today. Your goal “what you are searching for” is truth. So don’t miss this opportunity. During these four or five days, **take time to be still** and seek the truth, truth is Jesus Christ. Seek the light, the light is Jesus Christ. Seek the way, the way is also Jesus Christ.

1. “The Song of the Great Wind”

Liu Bang, Emperor Gaozu of the Han Dynasty, once wrote a short song that became famous throughout history: ²

“The great wind rises, O, the clouds soar high. My power sweeps across the land, O, I return to my homeland. Where can I find brave warriors, O, to guard the frontiers?”

He said these three lines after he had conquered the empire and returned home in honor. Let us look at them one by one.

1.1 “The great wind rises, O, the clouds soar high”

² **Liu Bang (劉邦, 256–195 BC)**, later known as Emperor Gaozu of Han (漢高祖), was the founder of the Han dynasty (206 BC–220 AD). Born into a peasant family, he rose to power during the collapse of the Qin dynasty and defeated his rival Xiang Yu (項羽) in 202 BC. After establishing the Han dynasty, he wrote the famous poem **The Song of the Great Wind (大風歌)**, expressing both his triumph and his concern about finding capable people to defend the empire.

Pronunciation of the poem:

大風起兮，雲飛揚

Dà fēng qǐ xī, yún fēi yáng

“The great wind rises, O, the clouds soar high.”

威加海內兮，歸故鄉

Wēi jiā hǎi nèi xī, guī gù xiāng

“My power sweeps across the land, O, I return to my homeland.”

安得猛士兮，守四方

Ān dé měng shì xī, shǒu sì fāng

“Where can I find brave warriors, O, to guard the frontiers?”

The great wind rises -- when the great wind blows, it sweeps away dirty smoke and polluted air. Everything is cleared out. When the wind rises, it is like gusts sweeping away dead leaves. It clears the mind and refreshes the spirit.

Back then, Liu Bang started such a “great wind.” He not only brought peace to the land but governed the country with a new spirit. He removed the corruption of the previous dynasty and replaced it with a new way of leading the nation.

O, the clouds soar high -- means the clouds disappear and the fog lifts. Especially the heavy and polluted mist is blown away by this powerful wind. What remains is a clear sky stretching for miles, sunlight shining over a new world.

1.2 “My power sweeps across the land, O, I return to my homeland”

After bringing the country into order, he could finally return home and rest for a while. Once the corruption was cleared away, the people throughout the land could live and work in peace.

Earlier, he had worried before others worried. Now he could enjoy peace after others enjoyed peace. He returned home in honor and allowed himself some rest.

1.3 “Where can I find brave warriors, O, to guard the frontiers?”

Even while resting, he kept thinking. Although his enemies had been defeated and the land was at peace, enemies could return. Brave soldiers would still be needed to protect the peace that had been won.

When he thought about his people, he hoped to find courageous generals and wise leaders to help him govern the nation, so the people could continue to live and work in peace.

The Romans also said, “If you want peace, prepare for war.”

To guard the frontiers -- means every direction, every border and every place where an enemy might attack must be guarded carefully.

But where could such brave men be found? He felt anxious, uncertain, and concerned.

“How can I find them? Where can they be found?”

2. A New Meaning of “The Song of the Great Wind” — Jesus Is Also Looking for His Warriors

In the same way, Jesus Christ spoke about renewal in society. He said: **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”** (Matthew 28:18)

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus also sent out His own officers, His strong ones, and His disciples, to guard the frontiers for Him. **The difference is that Jesus’ authority is much greater than Liu Bang’s: all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him.** Therefore, He sends them out.

Jesus appointed His warriors with supreme authority. His warriors were the twelve disciples. These apostles, who helped guard the frontiers by preaching the Gospel, were courageous and willing to sacrifice themselves.

At times, Jesus also expressed concern. Once, when He saw that the harvest was plentiful, He said to His disciples: **“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.”** (Matthew 9:37–38)

Jesus also felt there were not enough workers. He too is asking: “Where can I find brave warriors to guard the frontiers?”

How can such people be found? First, they must be discovered. Then they must be trained. After they are trained, they can be sent in every frontier to faithfully guard their posts. In other words: **discover talents, train talents, and use of talents well.**

In church, when we look at the crucifix, Jesus Christ stands near us as He did at His Ascension, saying to each of us: “The great wind rises, the clouds soar high...”

He formed twelve disciples and placed them where they were needed.

Now Jesus may be standing among us. He wants to discover people. Once He finds them, He wants to train them, so that in the future they can serve the Church, society, the nation, and the world with their whole hearts. Jesus Christ wants to use you.

3. Four Stages of Training Warriors — Renewal, Mobilization, Battle, Triumph

During this retreat, we must focus on training ourselves. **There are four stages: renewal, mobilization, battle, and triumph.**

President Chiang once called the nation to renewal, mobilization, and battle. If those three are assumed, triumph naturally follows. So we add this fourth stage to complete the idea. ³

3.1 Renewal — Clear Out Inner Confusion and Prepare Your Soul

When we hear the word “renewal,” and recall the President's call, we may feel somewhat ashamed. The President has been calling for renewal for a year or two now, let me ask you, fellow college students, have we actually renewed ourselves?

Now Jesus Christ, the supreme commander and king, is also calling you. **He wants us to renew ourselves! Renewal of what?** ⁴

In the first day of this retreat, **focus especially on renewing yourself. Prepare your soul. Clear away confusion and unhealthy emotions.** Then, in the following days, seek and find God's will.

Only then can we reach the higher goal: saving ourselves and helping save others, the answer to Jesus' question, “Where can I find brave warriors to guard the frontiers?”

³ The president is referring to Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 1887-1975). He was a major political and military leader of the Republic of China. He led the Northern Expedition to unify much of China, served as the head of the Nationalist government during the Second Sino-Japanese War, and after losing the Chinese Civil War, relocated the government to Taiwan in 1949. He continued serving as President of the Republic of China in Taiwan until his death in 1975. His call for “renewal” (復興/革新) that he began emphasizing around 1960–1962 in Taiwan. It was a broad call for moral purification, political reform, anti-corruption, and cultural revival.

⁴ The call to “renewal” is not a direct quotation from Jesus but reflects His teaching about conversion and new life. Similar ideas appear in several Bible passages:

- Mark 1:15 – “Repent, and believe in the gospel.”
- John 3:3 – “No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”
- Ephesians 4:23–24 – “Be renewed in the spirit of your minds... put on the new self.”
- Romans 12:2 – “Be transformed by the renewal of your mind...”

3.2 Mobilization — Develop Your Potential, Cultivate Virtue, Total Spiritual Mobilization

In the second stage of the retreat, we mobilize.

Usually mobilization means: if you have money, give money; if you have strength, give strength. Some call for total mobilization. So let us have a total mobilization of the spirit. If you have wisdom, offer it. If you have hidden ability, bring it forward.

There is a kind of atomic energy that remains inactive unless it is triggered. Some young people are like that, full of potential energy that has not yet been released.

During this retreat, **discover your hidden strength**. Let it be activated, like an atom struck and set into motion, so that it gives light, heat, and power to the Church, society, the nation, and the world.

Dear students, **each one of us carries within an atomic-like potential**, yet we often remain unaware of it.

Sometimes we just move through life on autopilot. We get stuck in habits. We get lazy, so we ignore that potential.

Sometimes we focus only on our flaws and weaknesses and forget to notice our strengths and gifts.

At most, you tell me I should “fix my bad habits,” but you don’t tell me that I should “build my character and grow in virtue.”

You may often remember to say I need to “work on my laziness,” but you forget to talk about “how to help others and make a difference in the world.”

Every young person has this hidden, atomic-like power within. During this retreat, we need to uncover it.

Through the strength that God’s Holy Spirit gives us, we must break through what is buried inside and release that potential, so it can shine and give off energy in society. That

is how we stand guard on all sides; **that is how we help create a world where more people can live in peace and stability.**

3.3 Battle — Fight Yourself; Challenge Your Own Heart

The third stage is battle. It sounds like it carries the smell of gunpowder. Whenever there is war, there are always deaths and injuries.

So let's look at how the Apostle Paul fought. In **First Letter to the Corinthians**, he says: "Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified." **(1 Corinthians 9:26-27)**

The commentary explains it this way: I make my whole self into a servant, because I'm afraid that while helping others and trying to save the world, I might lose my own soul. That's why Paul attacks himself.

What is he fighting?

In fact, society as a whole is the arena of our battle, but this is about the spiritual dimension, not the material one. **We need to clear away the corruption in society.** We need to strike down and remove what harms public morality. We need to uproot it.

But **where do all these unhealthy social trends and habits really come from?**

They come from your own heart.

The first step in this battle is to fight within your own soul. That means fighting against your inner selfish desires, fighting against the devil, and fighting against the spirit of the world.

3.4 Triumph — Following Christ in Glory into the Kingdom of Heaven

Triumph is the final stage. It's not enough just to renew ourselves, to mobilize, and to fight. In the end, we must also triumph. **We follow Christ Jesus in His glorious victory into the Kingdom of Heaven.**

The first step is to enter the Kingdom of Heaven within our own hearts. Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven is within you. As long as we truly renew ourselves, mobilize, and fight in this way, **we will experience a deep peace inside**, one that the material world cannot give. That peace is the Kingdom of Heaven.

The second step is that one day we will follow Christ into Heaven and enter the Kingdom fully.

4 Before Training, Be Still, “Stillness” ... and Then You Will Gain

But dear brothers, all of this sounds inspiring. The first requirement, however, is that you must quiet yourselves. **If you do not become still, you will gain nothing.**

In **The Great Learning** 《大學》, it says:

**“Only after being still can one be at peace;
only after being at peace can one reflect;
only after reflection can one attain.”**⁵

So during these five days, unless something is truly urgent, it is best not to talk. Your thoughts, especially your emotions, must become quiet. Set aside your usual social concerns and daily complications. Don't dwell on your problems. **Be still.**

Right now, **there is only one thing that matters: to seek truth, to seek light, and to seek the right path.**

Through truth, light, and the right path, we develop the abilities within us and step by step follow Christ Jesus, serving the Church, society, the nation, and the world.

This is the overall vision of this retreat. In such a good environment, pay special attention to stillness. If you truly want to gain something, this is what you must do.

⁵ This sentence comes from The Great Learning 《大學》 (Dà Xué), one of the Four Books of the Confucian classics. It describes a process of self-cultivation:

靜而後能安，安而後能慮，慮而後能得

(jìng ér hòu néng ān, ān ér hòu néng lǜ, lǜ ér hòu néng dé)

靜 (jìng) – stillness, inner quiet 安 (ān) – peace, stability

慮 (lǜ) – careful reflection 得 (dé) – attainment or understanding

The idea is that inner stillness leads to peace, peace enables reflection, and reflection leads to wisdom and true understanding.

5 Jesus Is Calling Out to Us: “Where Can I Find Brave Warriors to Guard the Frontiers?”

To sum it up in one sentence: **offer yourself to Jesus.**

Now listen again, this time imagine Jesus using the words once spoken by Liu Bang.

Picture Jesus at the moment of His Ascension, standing with His disciples. It is as if He speaks the same three lines:

“The great wind rises, O, the clouds soar high. My power sweeps across the land, O, I return to my homeland. Where can I find brave warriors, O, to guard the frontiers?”

You can almost hear Jesus sighing, saying to you:

“Where can I find brave warriors, O, to guard the frontiers?”

Listen again, He repeats it to you:

“Where can I find brave warriors, O, to guard the frontiers?”



Reflection questions: “These questions are not meant to be answered perfectly, but honestly, first in silence, and then, if appropriate, in sharing.”

1. According to section 3.3, “In fact, society as a whole is the arena of our battle, but this is about the spiritual dimension, not the material one. We need to clear away the corruption in society. We need to strike down and remove what harms public morality.

What are some concrete examples of the corruption in society today (e.g., in media, relationships, work culture, or online life)? And where do these social customs and habits come from?

