

HYON GAK SUNIM



Buddhist Monk

Hyon Gak Sunim ("Sunim") was born Paul J. Muenzen in 1964 to a family of devout Roman Catholics in New Jersey, U.S.A, the seventh of nine children. Educated in literature and literary theory at Yale University (BA, 1987) and comparative religions at Harvard Divinity School (Master of Theological Studies, '92), Sunim was ordained in 1992 in China: He was the first Westerner to be ordained in the People's Republic of China since the Communist Revolution. He has been doing Zen training in various remote mountain places, including 3 intensive 100-day solo meditation retreats and some forty 3-month intensive meditation retreats (ango) in the ancient Zen temples of South Korea. He has also trained with Shodo Harada Roshi (Shogen-ji), and has held a public conversation with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which was made into a mini-documentary.

Sunim received formal public certification of his enlightenment and authorization to teach (inka) from Zen Master Seung Sahn, at a public ceremony in Hwa Gye Sah Temple, Seoul, Korea, in August 2001. He was later appointed by Zen Master Seung Sahn to be the Guiding Teacher of the Seoul International Zen Center at Hwa Gye Sah -- his Teacher's 500 year-old home temple in Korea. He served as the Zen Master's personal secretary from 2003 until his death, in 2004. At his Teacher's direction, Sunim has compiled and edited several of Zen Master Seung Sahn's books, including *The Whole World is a Single Flower*, *The Compass of Zen*, *Only Don't Know*, and *Wanting Enlightenment is a Big Mistake* (the last three titles through Shambhala Publications). He also translated into English the 500 year-old classic of Zen Master So Sahn, *The Mirror of Zen* (Shambhala). Hyon Gak Sunim is the author of the Korean-language bestseller, *From Harvard to Hwa Gye Sah Temple*, an autobiography which became a number-one bestseller in Korea for nearly two years. The book is widely credited with leading a revival of interest in Korean Buddhism, especially among the young generation in Korea, where Buddhism had been perceived to be in decline. Sunim is also the editor or translator of several best-selling translations into Korean of Zen Master Seung Sahn's English-language books.

The former Buddhist co-Chaplain at Harvard University (1996-97), Sunim has given public talks for example at Harvard, Yale, Stanford, UC-Berkeley, Oxford, Columbia, NYU and at University of London as well as University of Salzburg among many others, in addition to colleges, divinity schools, and countless temples throughout Korea, and other temples in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan. He was invited to teach meditation to executives at Facebook HQ in Silicon Valley. In June 2018, he was invited by the "Young Global Leaders" of the World Economic Forum (Davos) to teach Zen meditation at their conference in the Vatican. It is the first time that Zen was taught inside the Vatican.

Sunim has founded a small temple-community (Zen Center Regensburg e.V) in the Bavarian UNESCO-listed city of Regensburg, Germany, where he leads intensive silent Zen retreats. He sits on the Advisory Board for OCCURSO, the Institute for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, based at the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich, supported by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Munich.

Topics (Selection):

- The Compass of Zen
- Only Don't Know
- Wanting Enlightenment is a Big Mistake
- The Whole World is a Single Flower