

Buddha's Day Ceremony in Kota Kinabalu

Written by Chin Yun Yin & Yong Chiew Fung
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This year for the first time Tzu Chi Kota Kinabalu had planned to hold their [Buddha's Day Ceremony](#) outdoor. To ensure its success, the volunteers worked and practised very hard two weeks prior to the event.

On May 9, 2010, the day of the event, the volunteers spent half a day decorating the venue prior to rehearsals. The sky suddenly turned gloomy and everyone was getting a bit worried. At 4 pm, the volunteers knelt down and sang "Our Earnest Prayer" hoping that the Ceremony would be completed successfully.

Undeterred

Fifteen minutes later, the first drop of rain appeared, followed by dark clouds. The drizzle soon turned into a heavy downpour and volunteers had to quickly set up tents to protect the ceremonial altar. Their efforts were in vain as all the tents were eventually blown off by the strong wind. Undeterred by the heavy downpour, all the volunteers were on hand to help.



After struggling for about 15 minutes, the coordinating team decided to shift the venue to their new prayer hall. All volunteers immediately sprung into action in transporting the altar to the hall and the ladies did the decorations. Shortly after, a loud bang was heard, followed by a power failure!

In darkness, the volunteers managed to locate and lit up the candles and lamps. Though chaotic, things turned out to be quite orderly due to the excellent support and coordination of the volunteers. Within 10 minutes, the altar was ready with lighted lamps surrounding the crystal Buddha statues.

Despite the heavy rain, a total of 400 people turned up. This figure was way beyond expectation. Even though there was no power supply, the visitors still waited quietly and patiently.

At 5.43 pm, two minutes prior to the scheduled starting time, volunteers found that they still did not have electricity to operate the sound system! The atmosphere was tense for the few volunteers, drenched in sweat and rainwater, as they worked hard to start up an old power generator. Amazingly, the moment the Master of Ceremony started the event, the power generator kicked in to provide electricity for the sound system.

Four Dharma Masters from Santavana Forest Hermitage and Guan Ying Ting Buddhist Centre gracefully marched into the Prayer Hall holding the lamps. Upon reaching the altar, and just when the Masters were about to offer the lamps, the power supply suddenly returned to light up

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the hall! There was no commotion when this happened as everyone maintained their composure and the ceremony went on accordingly. The atmosphere was indeed very peaceful and solemn.



The one-hour Ceremony was completed successfully despite the challenges. Master Quan Ping of Santavana Forest Hermitage said, "This is indeed a grand cleansing. We were given a precious lesson on Impermanence."

An emotional Brother Ong Tuen Yiok thanked the volunteers for their excellent Tzu Chi spirit displayed during the critical moments and for overcoming all obstacles to make the event a success.

Full of confidence in Tzu Chi

Other Buddhist organizations were invited to participate in the Ceremony, originally planned to be held outdoor. Pan Lye Chen from Santavana Forest Hermitage said, "I came for the rehearsals and was looking forward to the actual Ceremony. But, the downpour changed everything."

Pan continued to say, "I was a little disappointed that we could not present what we had rehearsed earlier. But then again, any outcome is a good outcome." Having the opportunity to witness how Tzu Chi volunteers dealt with unforeseen circumstances, Pan said, "The volunteers were quick in making decisions to effect the changes and act swiftly." Pan was impressed with the volunteers' team spirit and systematic way of doing things, hence the Ceremony still maintained its grandness.



"With this solemn Buddha Bathing ceremony, we can appreciate the great compassion and wisdom of Buddha." Pan explained that Bathing Buddha may be just a ceremony but through their participation, the public can understand the significance of it. She was very thankful to Tzu Chi for inviting her to attend this grand event; and she felt that, as a Buddhist, she must give her support.

"I was quite worried when it started to rain as I stepped out of the house," said Lim Kim Kwan of Santavana Forest Hermitage. On the way, her daughter even asked, "It is raining. Shall we go home?" Lim told her daughter that, "If everyone thinks like that, then there won't be anyone around to bathe the Buddha." Lim felt that children should be taught to have positive thoughts and not be easily swayed by the surroundings.

On arrival at Tzu Chi's Centre, Lim was relieved to find that the Ceremony had been moved

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indoor. She said, "Despite the challenges, the volunteers still managed to hold the Buddha Bathing Ceremony successfully. Excellent coordination." Lim was confident that Tzu Chi volunteers would not cancel the event because of the rain. "See! Despite the rain, Tzu Chi volunteers still got things done," exclaimed Lim.

Lim added that "The heavy downpour was meant to cleanse our soul." She felt that in our day-to-day life, we are bound to meet with negative thoughts, especially greed, ignorance and delusions. This is indeed a golden opportunity for us to reflect." She jokingly said the rain had stopped upon completion of the Ceremony; seems like we have passed the test!

Translated by Wong Mun Heng

Source: [Tzu Chi Foundation, Malaysia](#)