

Buddha Day Ceremony Hailed a Success Amid Storm

Written by Priam Nepomuceno, Erika Vizcarra
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In spite of being pummelled by the rains brought by Typhoon Aere, volunteers of Tzu Chi Foundation, Philippines, together with around 2, 000 people from different walks of life, managed to pay homage and respect to the Enlightened One by celebrating Buddha's birthday to the fullest, along with the Tzu Chi Foundation's 45th anniversary and Mother's Day, last May 8, 2011 at the Tzu Chi Great Love Campus (TCGLC) in Sta. Mesa, Manila.

The utmost sincerity, piety and pure intentions of the Chinese and Filipino Tzu Chi volunteers and guests, which include members of affiliate organizations and beneficiaries of the foundation, reigned over the strong rains as they gave their best efforts and endurance in conducting the sacred rite called Buddha Day Ceremony.

The ceremony paved way for them to cleanse their minds and hearts from afflictions and pay gratitude to the Buddha for coming into this world and giving people the gift of his teachings.



"This ceremony does not mean that we are going to bathe the Buddha as he is already an enlightened being. This means that we are purifying ourselves from afflictions and that we are striving to emulate the same pure mind and heart as that of the Buddha," said one Tzu Chi volunteer in expounding to the attendees the true meaning behind the ceremony.

Difference religions but same spiritual cleansing

Even most of the attendees were of different religions, they still felt the power of the solemn ceremony and experienced its spiritual cleansing effect.

Under heavy downpour of rain, everyone sincerely carried out the consecrated rite of bowing and offering flowers to the crystal figure of the Buddha, as well as dipping hands in the water laid before his image.

Through such ceremony, Tzu Chi hopes to bring out the truth, beauty and goodness of Buddhism, and promote it worldwide to lead more people to the right path of life and enlightenment.

"I've already set my time for this day so it never dawned on me to back out. (During the ceremony, I prayed) that everyone have peace in their hearts and also in the entire world. Maybe because everyone was very faithful and sincere that the rain stopped. I am happy that in spite of the heavy downpour, the ceremony was successfully and solemnly held. If all of us have pure and peaceful hearts, disasters in the world will be lessened," Tzu Chi volunteer Amelia Ting said. Ting, in spite of suffering from lupus for the past seven years, was among the hundreds of volunteers who have dedicated time and energy in the past few days to help make

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the celebration a success.

Newly-appointed Filipino Tzu Chi training commissioner from Marikina City, 54-year-old Nanelita Alburo, said that she was very excited to participate in her first ever Buddha Day festivities. Alburo virtually woke everyone in her block, which consists of 20 Tzu Chi gray-shirted volunteers, to ensure the latter's attendance in the event. "Aside from this, I even took along four members of my family so that they can witness for themselves this special event," Alburo pointed out in Filipino. Alburo added that her Christian beliefs are not in conflict with the ideals of Tzu Chi Foundation as the compassion and love it asks to show to one another is also requested by Jesus Christ and his followers. "The lessons which Master Cheng Yen is asking us to take seriously at heart are also being asked from us by the Catholic Church, hence I see no conflict in complying with them," Alburo shared.

Washing parents' feet with gratitude



Meanwhile, the celebration also upheld the spirit of filial piety through a special program where everyone was able to show their love and respect for their parents. In a simple but touching ceremony, Tzu Chi volunteers led the attendees in paying gratitude to their parents by humbly washing their feet and offering them red roses symbolizing their utmost love.

Seventy-three-year-old Tzu Chi volunteer Benito Romualdez served as inspiration to all the attendees as he brought his 100-year-old mother Lim Chong on stage to wash her feet. After making such loving gesture in tribute to all his mother's sacrifices, Romualdez shared: "No words can express how happy I am for doing such gesture for my mother." Romualdez himself was also offered the same gesture of love and gratitude as his two daughters, Tzu Chi volunteer optometrists Dr. Jeanette Oo and Dr. Milette Romualdez, washed his and his wife's feet. His grandchildren also did not miss the chance to show their appreciation and thankfulness for their mother Dr. Oo by washing her feet.

The value of filial piety exhibited by the four generations of their family moved the rest of the attendees to seize the moment to express their love to their parents on such a special day for them.

The commemoration of Tzu Chi Foundation's 45th Global Anniversary was also marked during the event where Tzu Chi volunteers expressed their gratitude to all people, donors, supporters and beneficiaries alike, who have become part of the organization's missions and gave them the chance to spread seeds of love and goodness and help alleviate suffering in society.

"Tzu Chi began as a small seed. The journey of a thousand miles begins with the single step. Therefore I hope everyone will take a vow to become a Bodhisattva and help those who are suffering," said Master Cheng Yen, founder of Tzu Chi, in a message she gave in celebration of the foundation's 45th anniversary.

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Before the celebration drew to a close, a sacred prayer was collectively offered by all the Tzu Chi volunteers and attendees where everyone prayed that human minds be purified and that the world be blessed with harmony and be freed from disasters.