

## Tzu Chi Signs First Agreement to Work With Vatican

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On April 26, the Tzu Chi Foundation signed its first agreement with the Vatican to work together to help the needy. It signed a memorandum of understanding with the Vatican's charity foundation, Lo vuole il Cuore, at Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Bonds between the two were formed in May 2012, after earthquakes measuring 6.0 and 5.8 on the Richter scale struck northern Italy, killing 26 people and causing widespread damage. The epicenter of the first quake on May 20 was in the Emilia-Romagna region, 22 miles north of the city of Bologna, and the second hit the same area on May 29. Many buildings, weakened by the first earthquake, could not stand the second and collapsed.

Tzu Chi volunteers from six countries in Europe came to work with local authorities to provide help to the victims; everyone saw the blue and white uniform and their spirit of unconditional giving. This deeply touched the members of the Roman Catholic church; the two sides decided to co-operate.



Witnessed by Cardinal Francisco Coccopalmerio, Tzu Chi signed the memorandum of understanding with Lo vuole il Cuore. In his speech, the chairman of Lo vuole il Cuore of the Vatican quoted from the Jing Si Aphorisms of Master Cheng Yen: "if we do not take action, it is like plowing the fields but not planting seeds. Everything is a result of cause and effect." He said that the two sides share a common philosophy. One who made the agreement to happen was Duke Rodolfo Varano di Camerino, who said: "I hope that, through this co-operation, we can help the public."

Signing on behalf of the Foundation was Stephen Huang, global co-ordinator of the volunteers. He explained to the representatives of the Vatican the work of the Foundation around the world: "we are a group that implements the principles of Buddhism. Our precepts are 'to cleanse the heart of man, bring peace to society and pray for those who are suffering'. Rodolfo Varano, a volunteer from Germany, gave a report of the work of the volunteers after the earthquake in north Italy in May last year.

Following this agreement, representatives of the two sides took a photograph to commemorate the event. The volunteers invited those from the Vatican to visit Taiwan and hoped that, through their joint efforts, they can do more good in the world.