

Letter From Dharma Master Cheng Yen to Global Volunteers Re. Japan Earthquake

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Saturday, 12 March 2011 00:00



Dear volunteers and staffs of Tzu Chi chapters around the world:

A catastrophic disaster occurred in Japan on March 11, 2011 at 2:46pm local time. An earthquake measuring 8.9 on the Richter scale, the largest one ever to occur in the history of Japan, caused a 10 meter high tsunami, affecting prefectures including Miyagi, Iwate, Fukushima and Ibaraki. Footages from media showed the tsunami like a massive moving wall of water, rapidly pushing boats, ships, automobiles and houses inland and destroying fields and villages. The tsunamis caused numerous fires, destroying many buildings; residents around two nuclear power plants were evacuated due to fear of radiation leak. Based on media reports, over 1,000 people have lost their lives, while thousands are missing. It is hard to estimate the casualties and damages caused by this devastating disaster.

The tsunamis not only affected Japan; more than 20 countries have issued tsunami alerts, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Pacific Coast of the United States, Hawaii, Canada, Central and South America. When the tsunami alert was issued, Tzu Chi global headquarters immediately notified residents along the coast of Hualien and surrounding areas. The headquarters also contacted local authorities to find out whether any preventive measure was taken. At the same time, the headquarters contacted Tzu Chi chapters in Indonesia, the Philippines and United States to take preventive measures. We are very grateful that the tsunamis did not create any major damages in other countries.

I often say that time is running out. It is truly worrisome to witness the rapid deterioration of planet Earth. Between January and March 2011, disasters have been occurring frequently: floods in Australia, mudslides and landslides in Brazil and Bolivia, earthquakes in New Zealand and Yunnan China, volcano eruption in the Philippines, and now, the largest earthquake and tsunami in the history of Japan. These disasters serve as a reminder to us to stay alert and be prudent and pious. We should also repent and have Great Realization.

An hour after the earthquake, Tzu Chi global headquarters already established an emergency coordination center. On March 11 at 5:40pm local time in Japan, the headquarters established contact with the Tzu Chi chapter in Tokyo, Japan via video conference call. The volunteers in Japan were all safe. Even though the epicenter of earthquake was around 400km away from Tokyo, people in the city could still feel a magnitude 5 earthquake. Aftershocks continued to occur. Japanese government decided to stop its subway service, so many residents in Tokyo could only walk home, and there was major traffic everywhere. Tzu Chi volunteers in Japan immediately mobilized to provide drinking water, hot meals and shelter, providing comfort and aid to the affected people. Some tourists could not find accommodation due to flight cancellations, so Tzu Chi volunteers in Tokyo helped to provide information and communication means so the tourists could find accommodations or return home.

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Tzu Chi volunteers in Japan will begin to distribute emergency cash cards to provide for the immediate needs of disaster survivors. The global headquarters has also prepared 50,000kg of instant rice and tens of thousands of blankets to ship to Japan. I often say that more love is needed when a disaster is widespread. I sincerely hope that everyone's love and compassion can be inspired to assist the disaster survivors in Japan.

More than 20 countries are potentially affected by the Japan earthquake and tsunamis. Our planet Earth and everything and everyone on this planet are all interconnected. We should cherish the precious resources provided by our Mother Earth and reduce our wants. As we protect our environment through cherishing all resources, reducing carbon footprints and observing a vegetarian diet, we can reduce the occurrence of disasters and mitigate damages to our Mother Earth.

Starting year 2011, I have been emphasizing the concept of Great Repentance to face the problems of frequent disasters in this world and human beings' endless wants and needs. When we observe a vegetarian diet, have Great Repentance in our heart, and realize that our endless wants is the origin of sufferings, we can ensure the sustainability of planet Earth. If we cherish all resources, purify our heart and do things to benefit all living beings, we can live in a world free of disasters.

Our heart is like a clear, bright mirror. As we go through life, dust begins to accumulate on this mirror, and our heart becomes clouded. To remove the dust on this mirror, we need to purify our heart. Through Great Repentance, our inner mirror will be cleaned and returned to its original, pure nature, and wisdom will be obtained.

Every disaster serves as an awakening. The earthquake and tsunamis in Japan serves as an awakening to everyone, to remind everyone to return to our pure nature and to protect our planet Earth. The pure nature of our heart is a heart filled with selfless Great Love. The Buddhist spirit of selfless Great Love is like the light from the sun and the moon. With this light, we will not be afraid of the dark. No matter what darkness disasters bring, as long as we have this light, darkness will be lifted. When darkness is lifted, all living beings will live in peace. I hope that all of the people in Tzu Chi will use this Buddhist spirit of selfless Great Love to bring forth light, and turn darkness to brightness, sufferings into blessings, and ignorance into wisdom and love.

Let us unite together to help the suffering people. I hope everyone can cherish the peace and blessings in our lives and pray together for the suffering people in Japan. I hope your kindness and compassion can be inspired, and in turn, we can inspire more people to give their love and to purify their heart. Let us extend our helping hand to assist the disaster survivors and rebuild their homes. I hope we can accumulate everyone's selfless Great Love to purify people's heart, build a harmonious society and create a world free of disasters.

I am grateful for your love and selfless devotion. May your life be filled with joy, blessings and wisdom.

Sincerely,

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Shih Cheng Yen
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