

Tzu Chi Holds Large Prayer Ceremony for Japanese After Earthquake

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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The foundation in Tokyo held a large prayer ceremony for the Japanese hit by the earthquake and tsunami, to express the love and kindness of Tzu Chi people around the world and pray for their safety and return to a normal life. It was attended by volunteers, residents from the stricken area and representatives of the Taiwan government.

On March 11, an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.0 on the Richter scale occurred 43 miles off the Oshika peninsula of northeast Japan, triggering tsunami waves which reached up to 133 feet. The biggest disaster to hit the country since 1945 left 15,900 dead, 6,000 injured and 3,600 missing and caused extensive and severe structural damage over a wide area.

The foundation's Japan chapter had originally scheduled a musical performance of "Sutra of Profound Gratitude toward Parents" on October 30 in the Shinjuku Culture Center in Tokyo. But, after the disaster on March, the chapter decided that, instead of the musical performance, they would hold two prayer ceremonies -- one in Chinese, the other in Japanese -- to comfort the Japanese people and express their love and kindness. Through the ceremonies, Tzu Chi wished to inspire the love, compassion and selflessness of the participants toward humanity. The prayers were not only for the victims but also for the volunteers and for all human beings.

The program started with a video clip showing how Tzu Chi volunteers in Japan have delivered relief aid many times. It also showed donations of money and care from 39 nations, including Haiti, one of the poorest nations in the western hemisphere. A street vendor in that country gave his last remaining coins to encourage the Japanese people. A Taiwanese woman, who has to do two jobs a day to earn a living, donated the money she earned without hesitation, after she heard about the earthquake. In a suburban village in South Africa, Tzu Chi volunteers encouraged children to donate, as a way to educate them about love and giving. All these donations symbolized the love from all over the world, collected one by one for Japan. In the video clip, the mayor of a city in the disaster-hit area said: "I can feel the quality of your character and Master Cheng Yen's teachings from the actions and language of Tzu Chi volunteers."



The relief work of the volunteers has touched many people in Northeast Japan and brought them to tears. They have been moved to see so many people from different corners of the world praying and making an effort for them. Since March 11, the volunteers not only provided aid supplies but also distributed relief funds to more than 100,000 households in 25 cities; they are continuing this work without interruption.

At the ceremony, volunteer Chang Xin-Yue performed the Japanese version of "Love Heals the World"; her kind and resonant singing brought love to the hearts of everyone. As she sang, the

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participants prayed together with one heart, collecting and sending love and compassion everywhere in the world. To give a speech at the event, Mr Fung, the chief representative of the Economy Division of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Japan, rushed back to Tokyo. He praised the work of Tzu Chi and promised to fully support and assist its future international relief. Another speaker was Ms Yoko Miura, ex-Councilor of Iwate Prefecture; it was she who invited Tzu Chi to bring the aid to Northeast Japan. "At that time, I was looking for supplies for the people. On March 21, I took the night bus to Tzu Chi's Japan Chapter, from where the relief aid started. The people of the Northeast truly feel the Great Love of Tzu Chi. There are many obstacles on the road to recovery. But, as long as there is love, there is hope. The people are, step by step, walking on this road."



Volunteers from the disaster area were invited to share their thoughts. Among them was Fukuko Suisha, the only Taiwanese resident of Otsuchi village; she married a Japanese man there. After the disaster, she was excited to see Tzu Chi volunteers from Taiwan on the streets and decided to join the volunteer work. She said: "after the disaster, I could not sleep without taking pills. But, after joining the volunteers, I could sleep without the medication. So I am very grateful to be able to join them." Another volunteer was Mikumo Sugiyama from Ishimaki city; she suffered from melancholia after the disaster. "I learned from the volunteers that the act of giving should expect no return. The volunteer work healed my depression." This sharing from these volunteers touched everyone in the audience.

They also heard from Mr Chao, head of the Overseas Chinese Division of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Japan: "Today's prayer ceremony is like a sacred Buddhist ceremony." He praised the volunteers who had reached out to the victims during their most difficult times and delivered Great Love across international boundaries.

Opening your heart for love is like lighting the darkness in the hearts of others. As long as there is one light, it can light up the darkness. Everyone in audience lit a candle, a symbol of the heart; they sang and prayed for every disaster victim in the world, hoping that their prayers would reach the ears of the Buddha.

By Chen Ching-hui
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