

Tzu Chi Celebrates 20 Years in Malaysia

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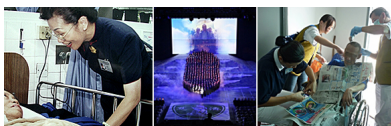
The Tzu Chi Foundation in Malaysia is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. It has more than 3,200 certified Tzu Chi volunteers (Tzu Cheng Faith members and commissioners). It has helped more than 260,000 families of all races and religions and is active in the four major missions of the foundation – charity, medicine, education and culture. It has dialysis centers, kindergartens and bookshops. In recognition of its work, in July last year, the Penang State Governor conferred on Master Cheng Yen the highest honor he can give an individual.

The foundation was brought to Malaysia by Yeh Ci-jing in 1989. That year her company assigned her to set up a factory in Penang, a major industrial city on the northwest coast of peninsula Malaysia with a population of 1.5 million. It has a great diversity of races, cultures, languages and religions.

While establishing the factory, Sister Ye worked hard to spread Tzu Chi's seeds of love, through the mission of charity as an initial step. It was no easy task – she faced the challenges of an unfamiliar environment, the language barrier and different ways of living.

She began charity work in 1991 by providing financial aid and loving care to a care recipient. There was much to do in Penang. Since then, the volunteers have never stopped this work, walking into the dark corners and helping those in need. She said in 1991: "Indeed, Penang is a very large field of blessings, because there are many impoverished people living here. We must be even more mindful in our work, to earn the recognition of the public, I believe there are many more people who are willing to come and join (as volunteers)."

In an effort to spread the ethical spirit of Tzu Chi, Sister Ye visited dharma masters in different Buddhist temples, where she distributed Tzu Chi publications. In the process, she received the recognition and support of the temples.



Inspired by her, many local people joined the foundation as volunteers. In May 1993, 18 volunteers from Malaysia went on a pilgrimage to Hualien; all were touched and vowed to come back to work harder for the foundation. Later, with the kind consent of Master Cheng Yen, the Penang Liaison Office was established and volunteer Koay Ji-hang was appointed chief executive. He was the first local volunteer to hold this post.

On August 7 that year, Master Cheng Yen sent a message of encouragement to the volunteers in Malaysia: "To me, Malaysia is so far away. To all of you, it is so near. But, to me, I feel we are even closer. Physically, it is very far yet, spiritually, we are so near. You must be practical and down to earth and put into practice the ethics of Tzu Chi." During his visit, she gave to Brother

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Koay a statue of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, saying: “emulate the compassion of Buddha in your heart, to reach out to help the less fortunate in society. Bring this statue back with you and express your spirit of helping those in need.”

“Without Sister Yeh, I believe that, until today, we would not have come to know about the Tzu Chi Merit Society in Malaysia,” said Koay Ji-hang in 1997. “Then thousands upon thousands of people really would not have the chance to come and join Tzu Chi.”



In a tribute to her on September 1, 2001, Master Cheng Yen said: “Sister Yeh went from Taiwan to Malaysia. She knows I often mention that, when you utilize other people's resources and local labor, how can you not give back to them? She always bears this in mind. So, since she went to Malaysia, she has been determined to spread the ethics of Tzu Chi. While she was there, apart from pursuing her business career, she was also sowing Tzu Chi's seed in this blessed land.”

On October 7, 2008, Master Cheng Yen said: “in Penang, volunteers follow Tzu Chi's footsteps very closely. They have also followed very closely the four major missions we have in Taiwan. They have done charity work very well and have ventured into medical care as part of it.”

Twenty years have passed so quickly. Now there are 92 liaison offices across the country, with about 3,200 Tzu Cheng Faith Corps members and commissioners. The members have set up the Jing Si Hall of the Malaysia Chapter, the Buddhist Tzu Chi Dialysis Centers, Tzu Chi Kindergartens, Jing Si Bookshops & Cafes – testament to the implementation of the four major missions and eight major dharma paths.

On July 14, 2012, on the occasion of his 74th birthday, the Governor of Penang conferred on Master Cheng Yen the award of Dato Seri, in recognition of the foundation's 19 years of work in the state. In response, Master Cheng Yen gave this message to the Malaysian volunteers: “this is certainly recognition for all Tzu Chi volunteers. You are the ones who have done all the work and I am truly moved by your contribution. You have turned dialysis patients into volunteers, transforming their lives. I am very thankful to all of you.”

Earlier this year, the Malaysia Chapter chief executive Koay said: “We express our heartfelt gratitude to you, Master Cheng Yen, for your guidance, leading all of us Tzu Chi volunteers in the whole of Malaysia, to learn to dedicate ourselves every day and giving us opportunities to become living bodhisattvas.”



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All her disciples in Malaysia take as their priority the work of purifying the human mind. They are committed to paving the road ahead with love, persevering with unity and team spirit, to take the missions of the foundation to greater heights in Malaysia.

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