

300,000 Attend Buddha Day Ceremonies in 34 Countries

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Sunday May 13 was the birthday of Buddha and the Tzu Chi Foundation. It was also Mother's Day. To mark this important anniversary, the foundation held 314 ceremonies in 34 countries and regions around the world, attended by about 300,000 people.

It was in 1996, its 30th anniversary, that the foundation designated the second Sunday in May as Tzu Chi Day. In 2000, the government of Taiwan designated the same day as the official birthday of Buddha.

The first of the ceremonies was held in Hualien, the home of the foundation, starting at seven a.m. More than 4,000 people gathered in front of the Jing Si Hall, their hearts full of sincerity and devotion. The ceremony was led by Dharma Master Cheng Yen and her monastic disciples; the participants included Tzu Chi volunteers, staff of its four missions, students of its schools, policeman, firefighters and employees of local businesses.

The Master stood on the fourth floor of the building. At the front gate, dharma masters from the Jing Si Abode in gray robes formed the shape of a dharma ship. In the square outside, Tzu Chi staff, teachers, students and volunteers wore white and blue uniforms to form four dharma ships and two lotus flowers; at a lower level, Tzu Chi volunteers and participants from the community formed two Bodhi leaves and the number 46, the day of Tzu Chi's birthday. Through the movements and different formations, all the patterns came to life.



New in this year's celebration was the pattern of the dharma ship, taken from one of the scenes in the musical of the Sutra Adaptation of the Water Repentance Text. The ship represents the saving of human beings. The ceremony lasted one hour; it had taken nearly a month to prepare, with staff and volunteers taking part in many rehearsals. These were not only to get ready for the Sunday performance. As Dr Lin Chin-lon, CEO of Tzu Chi's Medical Mission, said: "we want to present the beauty of orderliness. It is also an opportunity to create tranquility in our minds."

The music and words of the Dedication of Merit aim to soften the hearts of people and send out a blessing to every corner of the world.

*" Today, I sincerely pay respect to all Buddhas
Their teachings of compassion and wisdom purify my mind
May all beings in our world of turmoil cast off their impurities
The merit of the Buddha in rescuing all sentient beings is as deep as the ocean"*

Every second Sunday of May celebrates the Buddha, our Mothers and Tzu Chi; it is an

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occasion to express our respect and gratitude to Buddha, our mother and all living beings. These were the words of Master Cheng Yen: "Today is a very special day. I wish peace and happiness to all mothers and hope everyone will show filial piety to their parents. I am very grateful to see so many people come to celebrate Buddha's Day with a sincere heart. I am also very grateful to our volunteers, so that we celebrate Tzu Chi Day. I hope that all Tzu Chi people around the world can join their hearts together and pray for every person to live in peace and every family to live in harmony. May all minds be purified and may there be no disasters in this world."