

## Inspiring Love and Gratitude in All

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

Tuesday, 13 September 2011 10:30

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It's September 11 today. Looking back on this day in history, ten years ago was the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. The attacks happened during working hours. A plane hit the WTC North Tower all of a sudden and some minutes later, the South Tower was also hit by another plane. The destruction was instantaneous, but the impact of the attacks continues to ripple on.

War broke out among nations, taking countless lives and turning many people into refugees. It is truly a most regrettable tragedy. More over, because the collapse of the Twin Towers produced enormous clouds of dust and debris that contained harmful particles, the air quality remained very poor for a long time and it has caused over 50,000 people to develop medical conditions. Cancer or respiratory diseases, etc. have been diagnosed in the first responders of the 911 attacks rescue. Also, the health of those living near Ground Zero has also been greatly affected. So, the attacks have also created a major environmental disaster. Seeing that, I'm truly very worried.

Today also marks the half-year anniversary of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disasters in Japan. Feeling for the disaster survivors there, beginning in March, Tzu Chi volunteers from Taiwan have been joining those from Japan to go to the disaster areas in several teams. They distributed hot meals, blankets, food supplies as well as cash gifts and have already been giving out aid numerous times. At this moment, there is also a team of our volunteers distributing aid into two different areas in Japan.

Knowing that Tzu Chi originated from Taiwan and that the aid they receive comes from the love of Tzu Chi volunteers worldwide, the disaster survivors in Japan have trust in Tzu Chi. With each distribution, our volunteers find that the locals are opening up to us and some have even joined us as volunteers. See that the locals' enthusiasm to help has been inspired and such altruistic love is actually something everyone inherently has.

In Buddhism, there is a Buddha named "Bright Light of the Sun and Moon." The name describes the Buddha's virtue. Actually, every one of us can have this virtue too, which is the fruit of spiritual cultivation. Within the heart and mind of every person is the Buddha nature. So, every one of us inherently has such inner light like the sun and moon.

In the world we live in today, which is full of darkness and turmoil, if we but light one small candle, it can still help light the way for others. All of us can be a person who shines that light. We can all be a light house in the darkness pointing out a way. So, in Japan, Tzu Chi volunteers have already been helping with the quake relief for six months. Has our work ended? No, it is still on going because around 200,000 families were affected by the disaster.

To date, we have only distributed aid to one-fourth of these families. There is still a long road

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ahead and still a lot more to do. So, given such a wide range of the disaster affected area, we must have patience and perseverance in order to go to more places to bring aid. We wish to personally deliver aid to every family. And because we've held several distributions already, people have come to hear of Tzu Chi. So, when we go to a new place to distribute aid, the locals already trust us. Those who've already received aid are grateful. They tell us that the care we give them is something they'll always be thankful for. Some of them are so grateful that they've decided to join us as volunteers.

Though only a dozen or so have joined, we should still continue to give of ourselves in hopes of inspiring love and gratitude in everyone's heart. If people have love and gratitude, they'll reach out to care for others. So, it is not easy to nurture the bodhisattva spirit in people and inspire them to walk the Bodhisattva Path. That's also why it is not easy to guide people toward awakening. It is a long journey, which requires great effort, patience and determination to hold on to our good aspirations and love so that we are able to give unconditionally and without any expectations. This is the way the Buddha is.

So, we shouldn't always speak of how much we've already done. There's no need to do that. We don't have time to look back on the past. We need to seize the present in order to create a better future. When a disaster happens, we need people worldwide to give their care. Take the Japan quake for example. People in 39 countries have donated funds so that Tzu Chi can bring aid to the quake survivors. So, the aid comes from worldwide. We've seen how TIMA doctors in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur humbly stood on the streets to solicit donations for the quake relief. They bowed 90 degrees to all donors. They are truly admirable.

We also see that our TIMA members in Singapore and Tzu Chi volunteers held a gathering for Tzu Chi's care recipients to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival. It was a very lively affair. It's touching to see what they did. Meanwhile, in a school in Taiwan, Tzu Chi volunteers went to offer health education and encouraged the students to eat more vegetarian meals. They also educate community members.

It is my earnest hope that everyone's heart can be like the bright moon which gives its soft, refreshing glow. All of us can do this. All of us should bring forth our inner light so that we can be like a lighthouse to people on the dark sea who, seeing the light, can gain direction and discover their own inner light.

Excerpted from Master Cheng Yen's Speech at the Volunteers' Morning Assembly on  
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Translated by Evelyn Sung