

World Zen Buddhist Association (WZBA)

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The Celebration of 2600 Years of the Buddha's Enlightenment

We are summoned by this honored reception, the Celebration of 2600 Years of the Buddha's Enlightenment.

On behalf of the members of World Zen Buddhist Association in Japan, I pay my deep respects to people here; Buddhist representatives visiting from across the world for the goal of peace, all the Buddhists, Thai officials, and especially to the people at MCU who eagerly worked for holding this celebration. Also I devote my prayers, "May the blessings of the Triple Gem guide and bless us all."

On March 11 last year, an extremely large earthquake in magnitude 9.0 attacked the northeast region of Japan. Subsequently tsunami attacked many times in the most height of 40 m destroying one fourth of cities and towns located at the seashore of the Pacific Ocean in the north side from the capital, Tokyo. The number of fatal casualties was 16000 and 3300 people are still missing. Eventually the total number of casualties recorded as 400 thousand at one point.

Furthermore, explosions at the nuclear power plants in Fukushima prefecture occurred by the tsunami attacks and the shortage of cooling water. Finally they could halt the potential spreading of radioactive ray, however, the power plants have been under risky condition.

Japan is the only country to have experienced atomic bomb attacks in the world. However, the nuclear reactors accidents occurred, which was claimed as the worst event. I sincerely apologize for the world-wide impact of this accident and deem that it is the time for Japanese people to seriously consider this event and to judge Japanese government ability on administrative control of nuclear power plants.

Cities and towns in the region were totally destroyed by the large-scaled earthquakes and tsunamis. The refugees needed evacuation centers. Buddhism temples in the region became the active evacuation centers to save the refugees for several months. During the evacuation period, priests and supporters in the Buddhism temples located in the area from Tokyo to western Japan supported the refugees sending them materials needed. Not only providing materials but also mental support for refugees is the main support in which younger Buddhist priests have been working for the refugees with no house, no work place and no job.

Besides, people in the new religions, Christianity or Islam are supporting the refugees as well. Among the supporting activities, emotional care or grief counseling is a very important care for the refugees and volunteering Buddhism priests are providing “listening” to the refugees visiting around the refugees’ temporary houses.

In October last year, a big flood damaged the area in Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia and the people in the area are still suffering from the damage. The damage in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University has been so heavy since the flood occurred that I needed to visit the university to see the damaged buildings with the Vice Rector, Ven. Sawai in February.

In the past, human being tried to keep harmonized life with nature. However, recently the people’s thought egoistically sifted to create convenient condition advantageous only for scientific or cultural development, leading large-scaled deforestation or industrialization of farmlands. They cut trees in mountains and built dams stemming the river flow and releasing polluted water into the ocean as if they could have controlled nature.

I assume that almost all of the recent natural calamity might be warning from Mother Nature to human being egoism. We should have more humility to nature.

Development and prosperity of humankind should be based upon preservation of harmonized life with nature which had been taken over by our ancestors. I deeply concern about our near future which would result in demolition if only scientific or cultural development should be emphasized.

Buddhism is a religion in peace. Now it is the time for Buddhists and all the people over the world to take strong action for future life harmonized with nature. At first, with strong mind, we need to get together over a border and to retrieve intrinsic mentality to appreciate nature and to keep blessings of nature. We need to eliminate ill mind chasing only selfish desire or egoism, to contribute to create prosperity with conscience over the world, and to save frail people who are suffering from prejudice or violence.

This year is the memorial year with the celebration of 2600 years of the Buddha’s enlightenment. We should regard this extremely big disaster as a hardship given to Buddhists and should respect the spirit of Buddha. The precepts of Buddhist laws showing the spirit of Buddha is “neutral way,” in another words, “the law of nature and the value of life.”

On the base of the spirit of Buddha with the celebration of 2600 years, all the Buddhists from the worlds should join together in order to establish rescue teams in each country, stock rescue supplies and set up rescue networks to be a world wide network. Now I would like to ask all the Buddhists attending this celebration to consolidate forces for this meaningful establishment.

I consider that we need to prepare for possible disaster in future in a worldwide team.

Everyone here attending this international meeting could prepare well and enough for next big disaster so that there would be no more victims in future. Shall we do it in a world wide team?

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Rev. Noriaki Kunitomo

President

World Zen Buddhist Association