

Symphony of Peace Prayers 2011

HIGHLIGHTS FROM FUJI SANCTUARY AND AROUND THE WORLD



MAY 22, 2011 marked the seventh annual Symphony of Peace Prayers at Fuji Sanctuary. Some 5,500 participants and 50 distinguished guests joined together in sending out prayers for the peace and happiness of humanity, harmony among nations and religions, and a transformation in human consciousness. Because this year's SOPP came shortly after the Tohoku earthquake of March 11, one of the most tragic disasters Japan has ever faced, the need for prayer and positive thought energy was greater than ever.



Opening remarks by Masami Saionji

In her welcoming address, Byakko Chairperson Masami Saionji offered her response to the devastating earthquake and tsunami: "Now, it is time for us to rise to our feet and...take on the task of breathing new life into Japan so that it may renew itself and carry out its true, spiritual mission in this world... Serving as a symbol of world peace, I believe that Japan has the role of paving the way for humanity by drawing out and developing its intrinsic sanctity." She

emphasized the importance of the SOPP in breaking down religious barriers and restoring humanity's innate divinity and infinite love. "No matter what happens," she said, "we must never be discouraged; we must never, never, never give up... Let us make the SOPP the cornerstone for a new and peaceful world."

Divinity IN with Calm Breathing

Following Mrs. Saionji's address, a large group of presenters gathered on stage to offer a silent prayer for all humanity, called the Divinity *IN* with Calm Breathing (also known as ocean breathing). This *IN*, or mudra, is a prayer without words, attuned through the breath to the universal source, calling forth the inner divinity of each and every human being. As they performed the *IN*, the Prayer Field was enveloped in a magnificent energy of peace and love. Listening to the sounds of the breath, participants could feel a deep connectedness and the joy of being united in an earnest desire for world peace with tens of thousands more people from around the world.

Praying with the Religions of the World

This year, six prayer leaders from Shugendô Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Judaism, Orthodox Christianity, and Islamic Sufism led participants in prayers for peace from their respective faiths. This simple act of religious and spiritual leaders praying the prayers of other faiths, joined in unison by all participants, sends a powerful message of tolerance and harmony.



*Mr. Riten Tanaka
(Buddhism—Shugendô)*



*Mr. Jagmohan Swamidas
Chandrani (Hinduism)*



*Mr. Hiroshi Nakahigashi
(Shintoism)*



*Rabbi Antonio Di Gesù
(Judaism)*



*Fr. Paul Koroluk
(Christianity—Orthodox
Church)*



*Mr. Humayhun A.
Mughal (Islam—Sufism)*



Dr. Shlomo Alon

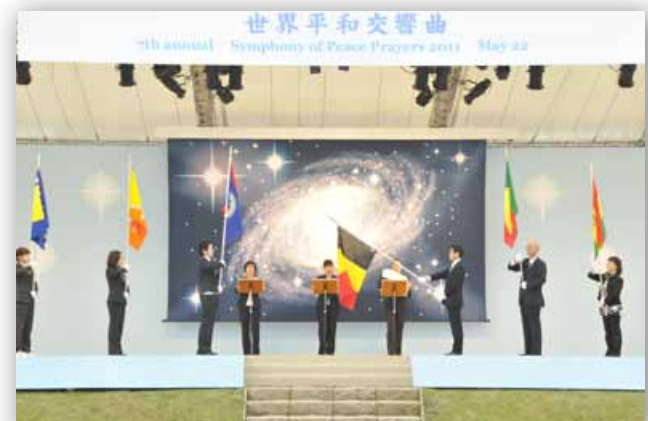


Mr. Tetsuro Ogiwara

Following these interfaith prayers, two distinguished guests took the stage to share a few words with participants. Dr. Shlomo Alon, head of Arabic and Islamic Education at the Israeli Ministry of Education, spoke of his admiration for the Japanese people's courage in the midst of such challenging conditions. Mr. Tetsuro Ogiwara explained that the events of March 11 were a wake up call, and talked about a 'natural energy revolution' leading to a new human civilization.

Prayers for Peace in Each Country

In the second portion of the ceremony, flag bearers carrying the flags of 192 nations and an Earth Flag representing 'all other regions of the world' entered the Prayer Field. Beginning with a resounding *May peace prevail on Earth*, participants prayed for peace in each country, speaking in its official



language(s), as each flag was presented on stage. Their prayers sent peaceful, harmonious energy throughout the world, transcending all differences of nationality and ethnicity, and resonated out into the universe.

Creation of the Universe

For this year's Global Peace Meditation, Byakko Vice Chairperson Rika Saionji led participants in reading a poem entitled *Creation of the Universe*:

*When we quiet our mind and pray, we feel the prayers of all living things.
Our prayers become the energy of love and healing, embracing the Earth, humanity,
and all living things, and bringing all back to life.
The creation of a new planet Earth begins.
Even when human beings forget to pray, the earth, the seas, the mountains,
and all living things go on praying
For the time when humanity will awaken.*

*When we quiet our mind and pray, we feel the prayers of all living things.
Our prayers become light, illuminating the divinity in each and every human being.
At that time, the Earth, humanity, and all living things become one, and a new universe begins.*

Closing

To close the ceremony, Byakko Deputy Chairperson Yuka Saionji offered some closing words. "We are restoring ourselves back to our connection with others; our consciousness is merging into one through prayer," she said. "We are establishing a connection with our inborn power and merging with our true self. We are connecting with the life of others, connecting with the movements of the universe and mother nature... We are not isolated individuals; rather, we are interconnected... Prayer allows us to experience this truth not through intellect, but with our body and soul."



Finally, the flag bearers returned to the Prayer Field, and with a resounding musical crescendo, the flags of each nation were lifted high in the air. For the seventh consecutive year, Fuji Sanctuary was filled with vibrations of joy, peace and unity, as another successful Symphony of Peace Prayers came to a close.



SOPP and Global Link events around the world

This year again, thousands of peace-loving people in over 50 countries joined Fuji Sanctuary in sending out heartfelt prayers and wishes for peace. Below are photos from a few of the locations where local SOPP ceremonies and prayer gatherings were held in 2011.



Sandpoint, Idaho, USA



Croton Falls, NY, USA



Stuttgart, Germany



Lucknow, India



Mexico City, Mexico



Buenos Aires, Argentina



Lahore, Pakistan



Geelong, Australia



Santiago, Chile



Democratic Republic of Congo



Manila, Philippines