



Symphony of Peace Prayers 2014

HIGHLIGHTS FROM FUJI SANCTUARY

THE TENTH ANNUAL Symphony of Peace Prayers at Fuji Sanctuary took place on May 18, 2014. Around 6,000 participants and guests gathered in the outdoor Prayer Field under a blue sky and bright sunshine, with a gorgeous view of Mount Fuji and the surrounding highlands, to unite their hearts and voices in prayers for the peace and harmony of humanity, and to celebrate humanity's cultural and religious diversity. For the second year in a row, the ceremony at Fuji Sanctuary was broadcast live over the internet (<http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/47744374>).

Opening remarks by Masami Saionji



Byakko Chairperson Masami Saionji opened the ceremony with a welcoming address. She reflected on the purpose and significance of the SOPP, saying: "When people of pure heart and mind gather simultaneously under the common purpose of uplifting humanity and creating world peace, we are able to manifest a tremendous global effect. When people with similar intentions increase in number from one to two and from ten to one hundred, the power of prayer begins to expand, allowing people the world over to catch the vibrations of our prayers. The world is then embraced in the light of divine rebirth as more and more people awaken to their inner divinity."

Mrs. Saionji looked back with gratitude on the first ten years of the SOPP and looked forward to the grand event that is being planned at Fuji Sanctuary in 2015, when an international group of leaders working in many different spheres will gather "to discuss their visions of a world and social system rooted in divine consciousness. The outcome of these discussions will be shared at the 2015 SOPP." She added: "In order for world peace to manifest, each member of humanity must experience a rebirth of their inner divinity. There is no greater joy than to engage in interfaith prayers together today, generating a great movement forward."

Divinity IN with Calm Breathing

A large group of presenters gathered on stage to offer a silent prayer for all humanity. 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. The sounds of deep, spiritualized breathing called forth a sense of peace and connectedness, laying a vibrational foundation for the ceremony.

Praying with the Religions of the World

This year, prayer leaders from seven world faiths—Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Hinduism—led participants in peace prayers from their respective traditions, followed by a prayer from Byakko Shinko Kai, led by Chairperson Masami Saionji. Each prayer leader addressed participants with a brief message before beginning his or her prayer. The prayers were printed in the program booklets, so that participants could join in the prayers at appropriate points, earnestly lending their voices even to prayers in foreign languages. 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. Humayun A. Mughal
(Islam—Sufism)*



*Fr. Franco Sottocornola
(Christianity—Catholicism)*



*Rabbi David A. Kunin
(Judaism)*



*Mr. Masahito Ishikawa
(Shintoism)*



*Mr. Katsuyuki Shimamoto
(Buddhism—Sôtô Zen)*



*S.S. Sada Anand Singh Khalsa
(Sikhism)*



*Ms. Shantisree Goswami
(Hinduism)*

Messages from home and abroad

After the interfaith prayers, the distinguished guests attending this year's SOPP ceremony were introduced to participants. In addition to these guests of honor, many prayer leaders and guests from Japan and around the world who had participated in previous years sent messages to Fuji Sanctuary in support of the SOPP. Among them were Dr. Genevieve Balance-Kupang (Philippines), The Rev. Dr. James Channan, OP (Pakistan), Dr. Jagdish Gandhi (India), The Rev. Canon Charles P. Gibbs (United States), Ambassador Mussie Hailu (Ethiopia), Dr. Bawa P. Jain (United States), Mr. Mapendo Kasongo (D.R. of Congo), Mr. Fraide-Emmanuel Kibibi (Uganda), Dr. Soho Machida (Japan), Mother Mangalam (Malaysia), Dr. Gerald Schroeder (Israel), Mr. Mohanmand Abdur Rahman Siddiqi (Japan), Dr. Bob Stilger (United States), Ms. Yumi Yoshimoto (Japan), and Mr. Akira Yoneda (Japan).

Prayers for Peace in Each Country

The second major part of the program was ‘Prayers for the Peace of Each Country in Each National Language.’ To begin this part of the ceremony, flag bearers carrying the flags of 193 nations and an Earth Flag representing ‘all other regions of the world’ entered the Prayer Field, accompanied by original music composed by Mr. Kenichi Yamamoto. The prayers began with the sound of a bell and the prayer *May Peace Prevail on Earth*. Then, as each nation’s flag was presented on stage, participants prayed, *May peace be in (name of country)* in the country’s official language(s). Their unified prayers co-resonated and sent waves of light and love to the people in each country and region, so that humanity may live in peace and harmony as soon as possible.



Closing

Byakko Deputy Chairperson Yuka Saionji then gave a closing address. She remarked on the continuous growth and expansion of the SOPP to more people and more corners of the globe, and deeply thanked all the guests, participants, staff, and volunteers for making this possible. She then went on to describe the power of prayer in creating peace on earth:



“When we give all our heart and all our energy to our prayer, and pray together in unison, we become the prayer. Then, we realize that we are no longer praying for peace, but that we are peace. Peace is not something we long for—peace is actually present here, in each of us. When we step back for a moment, we realize that peace is in the space surrounding us, and in each other... No matter what religion, what faith, what color of skin, or what passport you have, or how old you are, it simply doesn’t matter. We can actually be peace in that moment as one. We can become love. We can cherish, respect, and admire each other and all existence on earth.” She asked participants to hold on to the feelings of peace and love generated at this event, and to continue living in this moment.

Participants applauded as the flags of the world were again carried out into the Prayer Field and hoisted high in the air to close the ceremony. For the tenth consecutive year, thousands of hearts had become one, creating a great wave of peace, love, and harmony that touches all humanity.

MAY PEACE PREVAIL ON EARTH