

SYMPHONY *of* PEACE PRAYERS 2017

Highlights from Fuji Sanctuary

OVER 10,000 people from across Japan and around the world gathered at Fuji Sanctuary on Sunday, May 14th, 2017, for the 13th annual Symphony of Peace Prayers. Though the day was cloudy and cool, warm, smiling faces greeted one another as participants took seats in the outdoor Prayer Field to join with over 100 prayer leaders and distinguished guests in sending out prayers of peace and love to all humanity.

Following the inauguration of the Fuji Declaration in 2015 and the launch of the Soul of WoMen campaign in 2016 (more info at fujideclaration.org), this year's ceremony once again focused on themes of balance, harmony, and oneness. Two days prior to the SOPP, a Fuji Declaration Symposium was held in Tokyo, with the theme of restoring balance between the divine feminine and divine masculine. An international group of thought leaders working in various fields discussed a range of topics, and many of them joined in the SOPP ceremony as special guests.



Opening remarks by Masami Saionji



The welcoming address by Byakko Chairperson Masami Saionji emphasized the need for all human beings to seek out and manifest their 'divine spark' as a way to bring an end to the struggle, confrontation, and destruction plaguing the world.

When we grasp hold of our divine spark, we can accomplish anything. Anything is possible for us. But at present, most of humanity has closed their hearts to their divine spark, holding on to fixed ideas and assumptions. People feel helpless, unable to accomplish their life's mission. Put down by their families and their society, people lack confidence in themselves and go

through life denying their inner power. They become dependent on others, handing over their power to doctors, educators, and other experts. What is needed is for people to tap into their divine spark—their inner truth and inner strength.

Today, we human beings are at a crossroads, and it is critical that all of us awaken and evolve. We must continue praying for world peace and uniting in this mission. We are not going to be healed or saved by forces outside ourselves. We have to seek out and draw forth the healing power within us. That is our role and our mission. When we live by these truthful principles, we naturally receive love, gratitude, and compassion from others. Let us stop comparing ourselves to others and competing with others. We can enter a path through which all will become possible for us. We can greet a world in which environmental destruction will be curbed—where confrontation, struggle and prejudice will come to an end. We will greet the day when all of these things will be healed.



Divinity IN with Calm Breathing

A group of presenters moved through the Prayer Field and in front of the stage, holding Japanese folding fans with light-filled words written on them. They performed a slow-moving choreography with the fans, and then performed the Divinity IN with Calm Breathing, a prayer without words that is attuned through the breath to the universal source, calling forth the inner divinity of each and every human being.

Praying with the Religions of the World

Prayer leaders from six world faiths — Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Shintoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism — led participants in peace prayers from their respective traditions. Each prayer leader offered a prayer on their own first, and then invited all participants to join in praying a shorter prayer or mantra. At the end, Masami Saionji recited a poem called "Creation of the Universe" and offered a prayer from Byakko Shinko Kai. Participants listened intently and earnestly lent their voices to these diverse prayers for peace. 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.



Fr. Rocco Viviano
(Christianity—Catholicism)



Dr. Shlomo Alon
(Judaism)



Imam Muhammed Rasit Alas
(Islam)



Mr. Yuko Chiba
(Shintoism)

Fuji Declaration Symposium

A group of twenty-four thought leaders from overseas who took part of in the Fuji Declaration Symposium two days prior to the SOPP were invited on stage. Many have participated in previous SOPP ceremonies, while others were new to Fuji Sanctuary. Mr. Hiroo Saionji, President of the Goi Peace Foundation, talked briefly about the gathering in Tokyo and warmly introduced each of the guests, who then greeted participants with messages of peace.



Mr. Zengi Tanaka
(Buddhism)



Ms. Deepti Diwakar
(Hinduism)

Ms. Preeta Bansal from the United States offered the following message: *We're currently in a world where our divine feminine energy is buried in a sea of collective unconsciousness. With your prayers and inspiration, we can each work to uncover those sparks, so that the divine feminine can come forth, like a buried mountain emerging from the sea in balance and harmony, to create a beacon of sustaining peace for the world.*



We Are All Shining Divine Sparks

The song "We Are All Shining Divine Sparks," which was written for the 2015 SOPP ceremony and launch of the Fuji Declaration, was performed by renowned Japanese vocalists Ms. Tomoko Maekawa (who also performed the song in 2015) and Mr. Fumio Onuki. The first time through, participants

listened intently as the singers' rich voices resounded through the Prayer Field, and then participants were invited to join in singing the second time around.

Keynote address



Mr. Peter Jiseok Jung, Director of the Border Peace School in Cheorwon, South Korea, was a guest speaker at this year's ceremony. He spoke about the Border Peace School and the efforts to build peaceful relations between North and South Korea, as well as about the power of prayer in creating peace in the world. He said: *I believe that peacemakers are seeds of peace. Being involved in a peace movement means not just to appeal with words—"Let's do it!"—but to do something that we can do for peace. It is not something Korean presidents should handle for us. It will take a lot of time to realize peace. But peace is impossible without those who work for it... The only way to achieve peace in the world is through prayer, I believe. Prayer is invisible, but it is the most powerful energy of life. Prayer is the most radical action to transform both society and our daily lives.*



Prayers for Peace in Each Country

Flag bearers carrying the flags of 193 nations and an Earth Flag representing 'all other regions of the world' ceremoniously entered the Prayer Field. With the sound of a bell and the prayer *May Peace Prevail on Earth*, the national flags were presented on stage one by one, as participants prayed the word 'peace' in each country's national language(s), sending waves of light and love to the people in each country and region. Each participant was given a large card with the flag of a particular country, and raised the flag when the country's name was called.

Closing

In her closing remarks, Byakko Deputy Chairperson Yuka Saionji talked about the need to do away with fixed ideas from the past in order to create a 'new story' for humankind. She highlighted some of the key points that came out of this year's Fuji Declaration Symposium:

How do we bring back our divine spark? Healing the wounded masculine back to the divine masculine and revealing the buried feminine to restore the divine feminine is the first step for us to take... The idea of the divine feminine and divine masculine is not and cannot be about gender. It is about a way of seeing and being, and it is something that resides in everyone. When that dance comes into balance, a shift will occur—from competition to cooperation, from domination to partnership, from criticism to forgiveness. In order to create a new world and a new story, we need to destroy our fixed ideas and be open to things that may not all make sense. We need to know that learning to love and be of service elevates our soul. We need to use our hands, heads, and hearts together in balance, and to know that nature is the gateway—nature has the answer in its design.



To close the ceremony, the flags of the world were again carried out into the Prayer Field and lifted high in the air, as participants gave enthusiastic applause, a powerful symbol of the whole world united as one.

A video recording of the entire ceremony can be viewed online at:
www.ustream.tv/channel/symphony-of-peace-prayers-english.

MAY PEACE PREVAIL ON EARTH