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The Candle Night Newsletter #28
February 18, 2009, Copyright (c) 2009
Candle Night Committee

The year 2009 has started with dark news. In spite of today's uncertain world, a hope--even as little as candlelight--should be kept in everybody's mind.

Topics

- *Candle Night in Zenryouji Temple--'Go home make a wish'
--fish carrying a light of life
- *Brief Report on Candle Night December 2008

Event Report

Candle Night in Zenryouji Temple--'Go home make a wish'
--fish carrying a light of life

Zenryouji in the Totsuka Ward of Yokohama City, Japan, was founded in 1233. It is a temple of Jodo Shinshu, known as Pure Land Buddhism, a Honganji School. On December 19, 2008, right before the winter solstice in Japan, Candle Night in Zenryouji was held in the precinct and main hall of the temple.

Visitors were welcomed by soft light from many candles that were placed along the gentle slope from the street to the temple. In the precinct, students and local people set up booths to sell hot drinks. With the lights down in the main hall, many people got together and enjoyed live acoustic music and a live talk show.

The event was organized by the Cafe Dela Terra. "Terra" means "temple" in Japanese and "mother Earth" in Italian. They hope that the temple can serve like a cafe and connect people. The members are Tomonobu Narita, the chief priest of Zenryouji, Shinichi Tsuji, a professor at Meiji Gakuin University and a key promoter of Candle Night, students at Meiji Gakuin University, and people from the local Totsuka merchants association. Candle Night was held at the temple on the winter solstice of 2007 and on the summer solstice of 2008, reflecting the hope of everyone to expand the movement from the temple to many more places.

Narita has been actively promoting the partnership between the community and Candle Night. He says, "Traditionally, candles go along with the temples. But I don't want them to be just a

decoration at a shiny Buddhist altar. I am hoping to bring back the original form of temples, a place where people can feel free to get together. Tsuji promotes the connection between temples and Candle Night saying, "Temples used to be the center of culture. I hope we can use their functions more and connect thousands of temples across Japan."

The theme of the third Candle Night was "go home make a wish--fish carrying a light of life."

The live talk show titled "What is happiness?" was joined by Tsuji and Masato Ogata, a fisherman in Shiranui, Kumamoto Prefecture.

Ogata, born in 1953, was a victim of Minamata disease, an illness caused by pollution emitted from Chisso Corporation's factory. Toxic chemicals were released into the ocean. His father, who was also a fisherman died from Minamata disease when Masato was 6 years old. For many years, Masato Ogata has been demanding that the Chisso Corporation and the government take responsibility. He stopped trying when he was 32 years old.

Minamata disease is caused by eating fish contaminated by the accumulation of methylmercury found in industrial drainage. Ogata "decided to think himself as a human being first rather than a Minamata disease patient and wondered what other animals would think about humans." He believes that "human beings need nature to live."

Toward the end of the talk, Narita and Anja Light, a singer-songwriter from Australia, joined and further discussed what real happiness is. Ogata said that "trust" in this modern society is more precious than money. Light thinks living in the vast wilderness of Ecuador helped her build a sense of trust with children. Tsuji responded to her comment and concluded with "Let's light candles in our minds. They are the lights of life."

Before and after the talk, Kazeyoshi, a farmer and singer-songwriter, and Light played their guitars and sang songs in the dim candlelight.

The title of the event, "Go home make a wish - fish carrying a light of life" implies that each participant should bring back what they heard to their home.

The university students distributed hand-made brochures that carried handwritten messages and a cute illustration.

"In the dark cold winter ocean was complete quietness.
A fish was carrying a small light.
The fish carried the light to his friends.
Some fish brought the light back to their nest.
In the nest, a newborn baby and mother fish were waiting,
They talked to each other, looking at each other's smiles for a long time.
Four fish gathered together around the light,
shaking their bottoms happily."

There was another candle exhibition in the parking lot next to the temple. The university students made a candle shaped like a fish. The candle was sparkling with Venus high up in the sky, the only visible thing in the high darkness.

(Taeko Ohno)

Brief Report on Candle Night December 2008

In December 2008, Candle Night events were held in Japan and abroad.

On December 20, 2008, in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, an event was held to invite people to join Candle Night the next day. The event was organized by Dark-sky Slovenia and Mountain Wilderness Slovenia.

Two musicians sang a few Slovene traditional songs and a number of representatives from environmental NGOs lit a 2.5-meter tall candle. A lot of media were present (newspapers, radio, TV) and the message was sent across the country, inviting people to join Candle Night in their own personal way.

427 events were registered on the Candle Night website.

Some events were organized by college students, others held in cafes and hotels. Each event was different and unique.

The events include:

"Candle Night at Yoshigahara Station--Rails of lights" featuring train rails with candles.
<http://event.candle-night.org/report.php?id=4455>

Designing winter constellations on the yard of an elementary school
<http://event.candle-night.org/report.php?id=4147>

You will find various events in the event section of our website. Please visit
<http://event.candle-night.org/houkoku.php>

Each time more and more participants join Candle Night, all in their own different way. Please send us what is going on in your country--not only Candle Night on the summer and winter solstices, but also lights-out or lights-down initiatives on various occasions. Send your e-mail to eninfo@candle-night.org

Warm messages were sent on Candlescape, our online message board.
<http://feel.candle-night.org/scape/>

Messages posted include:
I love my family and this world.

I'd like to always cherish the time we get together around candles and kindle a light in our hearts

across the world at the same time.

I hope everyone in the world can spend every day smiling and happy.

Just one candlelight may be small, but when the candles are lit together, they will make a big light.

Dear Daughter,

Your mother will always be watching over you, hoping that you won't lose the light in your heart.

If everyone in the world closed their eyes and carefully looked at the candlelight in their hearts, the world would be more peaceful. I pray.

You'll find other messages from all over the world posted on Candlescape. Candlescape is open all year round, and you can post your messages whenever you would like to. Please visit

<http://feel.candle-night.org/scape/>

We also invite your local stories, festivals and events related to candles and fires. Please send emails to: eninfo@candle-night.org

Editor's Note

How did you spend your Candle Night on the solstice in December? Many people made resolutions at the beginning of the new year. The year 2009 will be the opportunity when more and more people start to realize the need of new systems and new ways of thinking for human beings to survive. From a large perspective, individual resolutions, when put together, will be converged to make the world's resolution.

(Y.K.)

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We welcome your comments. Please send them to: eninfo@candle-night.org

This newsletter is funded by the Japan Fund for Global Environment.

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