

Buddhist charity comes to Philippine church's rescue

Foundation to finance rebuilding of typhoon-damaged church



Parishioners return religious images to a destroyed Catholic Church in Leyte. (Picture by Vincent Go)

Ronald Reyes, Tacloban City, Philippines, UCANEWS.COM, 28 February 2014

The world's largest Buddhist charity is helping rebuild a Catholic church in Tacloban City that was badly damaged by Super Typhoon Haiyan last November.

Monica Sy, from the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, said the organization caters to everybody.

"Our principle is 'no nationality, no religion'," she told ucanews.com on Friday.

The show of generosity has been welcomed by the Church.

"We are very happy and thankful for the great help and assistance extended by the Tzu Chi Foundation. Indeed, love, concern, generosity and kindness go beyond religion," said Fr Amadeo Alvero, a Palo archdiocese spokesman.

Alvero said the Foundation is donating \$670,000 for the reconstruction of the Santo Nino parish church in Tacloban City.

"With their generosity and love we will be able to rebuild our church soon," the priest said.

Alfredo Li, the foundation's chief executive officer in the Philippines, and Monsignor Alex Opiniano of Santo Nino parish signed a memorandum of agreement for the donation and reconstruction of the church on Friday.

"We allow people of different faiths to be connected with each other, bound by the same spirit of love, compassion, and understanding," Opiniano told ucanews.com.

The priest said the parish's association with the Tzu Chi Foundation started when the charity offered a cash-for-work program to typhoon victims.

The group later set up tents for displaced families in the church's courtyard and extended financial assistance to churches and parishes in the area.

Once completed, the new Santo Nino church will have a state-of-the art design that will "withstand the wrath of nature," Opiniano said.

As many as 90 percent of Catholic churches in the central Philippine provinces of Samar and Leyte were destroyed by the super typhoon last November that killed some 8,000 people and left about four million homeless.