

Recitation B

Compassion after Japan's Disasters

At 2:46 p.m. on March 11, 2011, a massive earthquake hit the eastern part of Japan. Tens of thousands of people were killed or injured, and a lot of people are still missing.

After the earthquake, over 130 nations, nearly 40 international organizations, a number of nongovernmental organizations and people from all over the world extended their best wishes to us. Moreover they have expressed their support and solidarity through donations and other means. Various countries sent rescue workers into the affected areas.

U.S. rescue teams sent to the tsunami-ravaged Iwate Prefecture cities of Ofunato and Kamaishi were shocked at the devastating scenes in front of them. But what surprised them most were their encounters with the locals.

"I haven't got much," said a woman whose shop had been reduced to rubble, as she offered rice crackers to the workers. Likewise, a member of a Chinese rescue team in Ofunato recalls being thanked by local people for traveling such a long way to help, and receiving candy and snacks from them. Another worker who tried to buy food at a convenience store said payment was refused when the shop staff realized the customer was helping with the relief efforts. The worker ended up being given instant noodles and rice balls for free.

Such acts of compassion among the Japanese in the face of hardship have touched the hearts of many people overseas, but those in other countries have been showing plenty of compassion themselves.

Residents of an orphanage in Malaysia raised money through a donation drive. The money was delivered to the Japanese Embassy in Malaysia. Meanwhile, 40 Pakistani children with a blood disease donated 10 soccer balls to Japanese children in the disaster areas. Also, poor students living in Brazil have offered change they collected in empty cans.

In these post-earthquake days, people's kindness and compassion have been seen in small acts everywhere. We hope that with these acts, the sadness enveloping the areas affected by the earthquake, tsunami and other crises will be healed.

(335 words)