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Taiwan cardinal, Dalai Lama in wide range discussions

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Cardinal Shan, Dalai Lama (CNS photo)

The Dalai Lama drew more than 1,000 people to an arena in southern Taiwan today to witness his meeting with Catholic Cardinal Shan Kuo-his as part of his five- day visit to comfort survivors of Typhoon Morakot.

The two religious leaders received a standing ovation from the crowd at the Hanshin Arena in the city of Kaohsiung where they held a public dialogue for about 2 hours.

The Dalai Lama said a short prayer in Tibetan, after which a Christian choir sang a hymn in Mandarin and the cardinal said a prayer.

Flanked by police and protected by a submachine gun totting SWAT team, the 76-year-old Dalai Lama and the 86-year old Catholic cardinal entered the auditorium together accompanied by opposition Democratic Progressive Party Mayor Chen Chu, who was instrumental in inviting the Dalai Lama to Taiwan for a ?humanitarian and religious journey? to pray for victims and survivors of a recent typhoon.

According to wire services, the Dalai Lama began the dialogue by chanting a Tibetan sutra, while the cardinal issued a prayer for God for salvation for the victims of Typhoon Morakot, which last month left 461 people dead and 192 others missing.

During their discussions the two leaders ranged over the differences between Buddhism and Catholicism and the need for inter-religious dialogue, respect and cooperation. They also discussed the challenge faced by humanity by global warming, inadequate education and the lack of ethics and morality in society.

Shan warned that the incidence of powerful typhoons and floods will rise as temperatures rise and said that humanity needs to improve preparations and preventions for survival. He urged the Taiwan government to formulate comprehensive plans for water and soil conservation, promote ecological recovery and resettle village in danger areas through dialogue and careful design and refrain from simply rebuilding bridges and structures in their original locations.

In his briefest remark in his public discussions, the Dalai Lama stated, in Chinese, ?I agree entirely.?

Asked for advice on how to heal Taiwan?s own deep social divisions, the Dalai Lama said that influential people in society, including religious, business, political, government and judicial leaders, should carry out their work with honesty, sincerity and transparency and ordinary people should be truthful and honest with their neighbors to foster trust.

During the luncheon, the Dalai Lama contributed $50,000 for Typhoon Morakot disaster relief.

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