

Japanese Tea Ceremony Offered to Diplomats

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Washington DC, USA - More than 40 diplomats, guests and friends of UPF attended a Japanese Tea Ceremony in Washington DC on Nov. 13, 2014.

The Japanese Tea Ceremony for the autumn was held on November 13, 2014, on a cloudy day, yet the changing leaves of bright yellow and red colors provided a perfect surrounding to welcome the guests to the tea ceremony and to enjoy a time of sharing and friendship at the event.

More than 40 diplomats, guests and friends of UPF from 13 embassies attended, including Albania, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Lesotho, Libya, the People's Republic of China, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan and Yemen.

UPF offers several cultural programs among its peacebuilding initiatives throughout the year. The Japanese Tea Ceremony is uniquely suited to expressing the spirit and principles that UPF promotes in its effort to build 'one family under God' by practicing 'living for the sake of others' to resolve conflict and reconcile the divided human family.

What is learned in the "Way of Tea" is how to respect others, live in peace and harmony, and obtain a tranquility of heart. It also teaches beautiful manners and the etiquette of serving others.

In a traditional tea house, there are two entrances: one entrance for the host and another for the guests. The guest entrance is lower signifying humility. Lowering the head during entry was also done as a sign of respect to the other guests already seated in the room. Another reason to bow upon entry was so the guests would feel that they were entering a different world. One might be a rich and powerful businessman or an ambassador, but one will leave all the cares and social status behind and enter the tea house as just an individual person.

The fundamental spirit of the Way of Tea is the equality of all people, which eliminates any elements that might give advantage to a particular kind of person. At the same time, the host prepares the tea ceremony with the attitude that "This is the one chance in one's lifetime to meet this person." Therefore, this encounter is treated with utmost care, and it has eternal significance for the host.

This way of life that has been practiced and developed uniquely in the hearts of the Japanese people since the tea was first introduced by Eisai, a Zen Buddhist who brought green tea powder and the tea etiquette in the 11th century. Eisai also promoted drinking green tea as a medicinal drink that promotes a long life and cures illness.

At the Japanese Tea Ceremony, the guests enjoyed learning about the spirit of the "Way of Tea" ceremony and tried to leave their concerns behind and just enjoy participating in the tea ceremony and friendship.