

慈濟快報

TZU CHI EXPRESS



Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Philippines
76 Cordillera cor. Agno Sts., Brgy. Doña Josefa, QC
(632) 732-0001

Tzu Chi Great Love Campus
1000 Cordillera cor. Lubiran Sts., Bacood, Sta. Mesa, Mla.
(632) 714-1188; 714-2288; 7166511

Jing Si Books & Café
Soler Tower, 1342 Soler St., Sta. Cruz, Mla.
(632) 733-3296

tzuchi_phils@ph.tzuchi.org
www.tzuchi.org.ph

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"The more good deeds we do, the more worries we let go of." - Master Cheng Yen

Making miracles happen in Bohol

Reported and Photographed by Jamaica Digo

A farmer's world lights up

Virgilio Cahigao is a picture of a downcast man with his head bent as he sits on the wooden chair inside their

work at the farm. It was a decision that had a terrible blow into the Cahigao household. 38-year-old Virgilio, after all, is the only breadwinner of the family.

Since their father died of dengue a few years back, Virgilio had been the one supporting his 62-year-old mother and his 40-year-old sister, Victoria, who can no longer work because of a complication after giving birth 10 years ago.

"When he was still able to work, he managed to buy our sister her medicines but now that he can no longer see and work, we haven't been able to buy any," says his younger sister, Melodia Sawayan.

Coming from a poor household where the husband is also a farmer who earns just enough to support the family, Sawayan cannot bear the sight of her siblings and mother suffering. So when she found out about Tzu Chi's Eye Mission, she took his brother to Tagbilaran City to be operated.

humble home in Jagna, Bohol – the only place he can confidently go around after he lost both of his eyes' vision to cataracts.

In effect, he was compelled to leave his



▲ Dr. Oliver Yu, a local ophthalmologist, operated on Anabelle Garcia's cataract-affected eye. A total of 192 patients suffering from cataracts and pterygium regained their vision through Tzu Chi's Eye Mission.



▲ A TIMA Doctor gets the size of Virgilio Cahigao's lens in preparation for his cataract removal operation.

Tzu Chi Foundation, through the volunteer ophthalmologists of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) Philippines, has been making a difference in hundreds of lives in Bohol through its annual conduct of Eye Mission here.

On June 11 and 12, Tzu Chi held its second year of free eye surgical mission in Bohol. Conducted at the Ramiro Community Hospital and joined by 7 TIMA members and a local volunteer ophthalmologist, it paved way for 192 individuals to regain their eyesight after suffering from cataracts or pterygium for long years.

Many of these patients came from poor families in the far-reaches of Bohol. They have long resigned to the idea of seeing again. They almost believed going blind for the rest of their days is their destiny; unless a miracle happens.

To them, the eye mission had seemed like the miracle they have been waiting for.

Making miracles...

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On June 11, Virgilio is among the first batch of cataract patients who found relief from the free eye surgeries. When he went inside the operating room, Virgilio was assisted by a nurse. However, after the surgery, he could already walk on his own.

Outside the operating room, Melodia felt like she was seeing a miracle happen as she watches her brother walk towards her. "My gratitude to Tzu Chi tops everything," she says. "Because of them, my brother is now able to see again."

"I am grateful to Tzu Chi," Virgilio says. "I was scared that I will not be able to see anymore. I wanted my eyes to get better so that I can get a job. I have to work again for my family."

A daughter's chance to be filial

"Before, when mama walks around inside the house and I am moving about too, we would hit each other's head," Anabelle Garcia laughingly shares. "Whenever we try to cook food or boil water, we



▲ A smiling Anabelle Garcia and her younger sister gesture their gratitude as they walk out of the Ramiro Community Hospital on June 12 after Anabelle's successful cataract surgery.

would get scalded."

One year after the cataract on her right eye was successfully removed through an Eye Mission conducted by Tzu Chi Foundation in Bohol in June 12, 2015, Anabelle can now make fun of those incidents; but six years previously, it was a serious ordeal.

54-year-old Anabelle is a widow. She lost her husband to cardiac arrest on the same year that she lost her vision to cataract. With nowhere to go, she moved in with her parents in their humble home in Loboc, Bohol. But with a mother also blinded by glaucoma for 17 years, living together meant colliding with each other almost every day and sustaining injuries in various parts of their bodies.

Despite this, Anabelle would strive to do the household chores by feeling her way around the house while her elderly father works in the farm to provide food in their table.

It was a relief therefore when the family heard about Tzu Chi's Eye Mission in 2015. Through the free cataract surgery, Anabelle can see much better now and is able to perform the household chores more efficiently. Little incidents inside the house have been minimized.

"I am really happy for your help in allowing my daughter to gain back her eye sight," says Anabelle's mother, 77-year-old Marietta Balbido. "With your help, my daughter is now able to move about freely and can help around the house."

On June 12, 2016 – exactly a year after volunteer ophthalmologists from Tzu Chi brought back the function of her right eye – they came back to do the same on her other eye.

Local ophthalmologist, Dr. Oliver Yu, who also volunteered during the eye mission, performed the cataract operation for Anabelle. A few minutes later, she sits up from the operating bed with a satisfied smile. After six years of living with a cloudy vision, she is seeing the world in all its colors again.

"I am happy because both of my eyes can see now," Anabelle says after the surgery. "To be able to see clearly again is very important to me because my parents are getting older and there's no one to look after them."

"I thank God very much, especially Tzu Chi Foundation that they helped me so I can also be of help to my family. As long as these eyes can see, I will take good care of my mother and father," she vows.

BE PART OF TZU CHI'S GREAT LOVE MISSION

*"Use wisdom to contemplate on the meaning of life.
Use resolve to organize the time you are given."*

- Jing Si Aphorism by Master Cheng Yen

Join our Tzu Chi Family! Help spread the seeds of love and sow blessings for mankind.

There are several ways to contribute to the missions of Tzu Chi. Get involved in the following activities: disaster relief, community work, recycling, home visits, hospital visits, institutional outreach, and more.

You may also contribute your talent in

writing, photography, videography, video-editing, voice recording, cooking, program planning, audio-visuals, translations, and more. You may contact 732-0001 local 215 to express your intention to volunteer with Tzu Chi Foundation. You may also visit our office at Still Thoughts Hall, 76 Cordillera corner Agno Streets, Brgy. Doña Josefa, Quezon City.



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