



COMMUNAUTE BOUDDHIQUE ZEN
VILLAGE DES PRUNIER

Official Announcement

Plum Village
December 24, 2015

To all Plum Village Practice Centers,
To all Practice Centers and Sanghas world wide,
To our Dear Beloved Friends,

Our monastic centers in the United States and Europe are now a month into our traditional annual practice of the three-month Winter Retreat, observing ninety continuous days of mindfulness practice, without leaving the monastery to teach outside. In this spirit, the attendants taking care of Thay in San Francisco have also opened a Winter Retreat practice period with Thay, including early morning sitting meditation, walking meditation, silent meals, watching videos of Thay's Dharma Talks and participating in Dharma sharings.

Every day, Thay has enjoyed joining the brothers and sisters in all of these practices, and we can see that practicing with the community is an important source of spiritual nourishment for Thay, supporting his recovery in every respect. Thay recently enjoyed watching [an old Dharma talk](#) that he gave many years ago in the UK. He listened attentively to the entire talk, often smiling and nodding when his younger self made key points. The specialists tell us that this kind of activity is very therapeutic and supportive to speech recovery. Sadly, at this time, Thay has made only slight improvements and is still unable to speak. He continues to sing with us, and is making more and more recognizable words whenever we sing the Plum Village songs he remembers so well. We witness Thay putting a lot of effort and energy into trying to form the words, even though it can sometimes be frustrating for him. We are happy to report that we have now found a new speech therapist who will be working with Thay on a daily basis throughout January. In addition, we continue to explore many new and groundbreaking neuroplastic healing techniques, including neurofeedback, and cold laser therapy.

Thay continues to enjoy peaceful and happy moments gazing at the Golden Gate Bridge and making outings to the botanical gardens and other beautiful scenic spots in San Francisco. With the support of a brace on his right leg, Thay has begun to put more weight through the right side of his body and is training to become gradually more independent in terms of balance and standing. He continues to practice walking every day, for several hours per day, with the support of his physiotherapist and monastic attendants, who are receiving expert guidance and training.

We are inspired by Thay's spiritual vitality, his strong perseverance, and his immense will that has directed his recovery from the start. Thay is teaching us that he does not appreciate pity; he appreciates practice – and is sensitive to the mindfulness and true presence of everyone around him. We are learning from Thay's great dignity in accepting what he has. We can see in his whole way of being that, for Thay, what he has is enough. This does not hold us back, however, from doing everything we can to support his recovery; nor does it hold Thay back from diligently re-training body and mind. We are reminded of Thay's powerful calligraphy phrase: "This is it". In our efforts to support Thay's recovery, we are grounding our practice in our acceptance of the present moment, embracing it just as it is, without fear for the future, nor regrets about the past. Thay has always reminded us that the Buddha was a human being. Thay is grappling with this human challenge and we, his spiritual continuation, are always at his side. We can be at peace because we know all of us are doing our best to practice and to be there for our Teacher.

We feel deeply that Thay's physical recovery is inextricably linked to the health and flourishing of our fourfold spiritual family. This has been evident in the recent ordination of twenty young men and women into the "Redwood Ordination Family". Nine were ordained in Thailand, and another ten ordained in Plum Village, from Ireland, France, Holland, Italy, Indonesia and Australia. These novices ordained because they are inspired by the strength of Thay's Sangha Body and his living Dharma Body of teachings and practices. As a community, we are taking care of every aspect of Thay's body because we see deeply that he is not just in San Francisco. We can see his Sangha Body thriving a little bit everywhere, in ourselves, in each of the new novices, and in everyone. Thay's vision of the next Buddha manifesting as a Sangha is being realized.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to our spiritual family for being there, practicing wholeheartedly wherever you are. Each one of us is a cell in Thay's Sangha Body, and we contribute to taking care of Thay by coming home to take care of ourselves, our practice and our loved ones. In this way we are a beautiful, active cell in Thay's Sangha Body and Dharma Body.

Thank you for being there for us. We are here for you.

Wishing you all a peaceful holiday season,
With love and trust,

The Monks and Nuns of Plum Village

Future official reports on Thay's recovery will be posted from time to time at plumvillage.org, langmai.org, villagedespruniers.org, and www.facebook.com/thichnhathanh.

