

Respected Venerables,
Dear Noble Sangha,

We are very happy to represent our teacher Venerable Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh and our brothers and sisters in the Plum Village community to be here in this historical event. We would like to express our gratitude to the organizing committee for this precious opportunity to report to you all our efforts in presenting the Buddha Dharma in the last 30 years to the people of many countries in the world, especially of the Western communities. A detailed paper of our work has been submitted to the organizing committee of this forum and it has also been posted on our website www.plumvillage.org and www.plumvillage.hk. The paper is presented both in English and Chinese for your interest.

In this new century and new millennium, we believe that there is a great opportunity for the growth and renewal of Buddhism due to the advancement in many areas including technology, medicine, to name a few, as well as deep change happening all over the world in the process of globalization. During the last 100 to 200 years, Buddhism had been introduced to the Western community as ideas and concepts and now we can see it beginning to take root deeper into our daily life as a practice rather than intellectual satisfaction.

As a sangha of practice, in the last 30 years, we have tried our best to apply the teaching of the Buddha to the modern daily way of life. We continue to grow, to learn and to rediscover different ways of practice that can be efficiently taught and easily accepted by the people of this new era. We have helped to create and further the development of the form of Buddhism known as Engaged Buddhism into many different walks of modern life including retreats for *environmentalists*, retreats for *artists*, retreats for *children*, retreats for *peace activists*, retreats for *inter-religious community*, retreats for *psychotherapists*, retreats for *veterans of the war*, retreats for *business leaders*, retreats for *prisoners*, retreats for *law enforcement offered to police officers, prison officials, judges and others working in that field*, retreats for *school teachers*, retreats for *members of the Congress of the United States of America*, and many retreats for *couples, parents and family life*. We have seen many miracles happening in all of our retreats and practice centers. Many people have been able to reconcile and being in harmony again with their beloved ones after many suffering years of judging, misunderstanding and separation. Conflicted groups such as Israelis and Palestinians were able to embrace each other sufferings and aspire to work together for peace and reconciliation. Business leaders and congressmen are able to do walking meditation in their busy and stressful life. During the trip to Vietnam after 39 years of our teacher being exiled, with the authenticity and sincerity of our sangha, we were able to help to remove a lot fear, and suspicion from Vietnamese government and they have found us a friend and not an enemy. In all situations we have used the practice of deep listening and loving speech as a form of communication. This is in effect the fourth of the five precepts taught by the Buddha and which has been renewed by our teacher as follows:

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am determined to

Speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I will not spread news that I do not know to be certain and will not criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I am determined to make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

This is by the way an example of our effort to renew the Buddha's teaching. And in many occasions, for a future to be possible, our teacher has emphasized the importance of practicing the Five Mindfulness Trainings as the out of many difficult situations of war, violence and poverty that is happening in the world at the present time.

The seal of Plum Village tradition can be expressed in a very simple gatha: 'I have arrived, I am home.' This teaching of the Buddha and our Zen ancestors has been offered in the Discourse on Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone (*Bhaddekaratta Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya* 131). This gatha is practiced together with our in-breath and our out-breath during sitting meditation, walking meditation, total relaxation or other daily activities of body movements. The practice is based on the techniques taught in the sutras on the Full Awareness of Breathing (*Anapanasati Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya* 118), and the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*Satipatthana sutta, Majjhima Nikaya* 10). The teachings given in these sutras are further explored and interpreted under the light and the wisdom offered by the Mahayana tradition and are applied to our daily life guided by the Zen spirit of our lineage.

We have found that a monastic community will provide a more stable and solid refuge for all members of our four fold sangha. We have helped to renew many other practices available in the past only in the monastic environments and to offer them to our lay community. Building sangha is one of the most important tasks of this new millennium as a strategy to overcome the tendency of fragmentation in the modern way of life. We have found that it is very challenging and noble at the same time. Our teacher has spoken of the form of the manifestation of Maitreya, the future Buddha, not as an individual but as sangha, a community of practice. Monastic community thus will have a more responsible role for the modern society and the need for its renewal in practice amidst the modern life as well as organization is in urgency. We have offered the monastic community a Revised Pratimoksha, available on our web site, which addresses the new issues of using cars, computers, television, electronic games and the internet.

To conclude, in the last 30 years, we have tried to renew and to offer Buddha teachings and practices at all different levels of society, from the individual and the family to various larger segments. We are happy today to share our experiences to you, many sisters and brothers of other traditions some of our efforts which we have found successful. We hope that you will help us by shining the light of your experience and insight on us and how we can do better. If you think that our way is beneficial, we welcome everyone being creative, taking these methods into new and different areas.

Thank you very much for your attention and listening.