



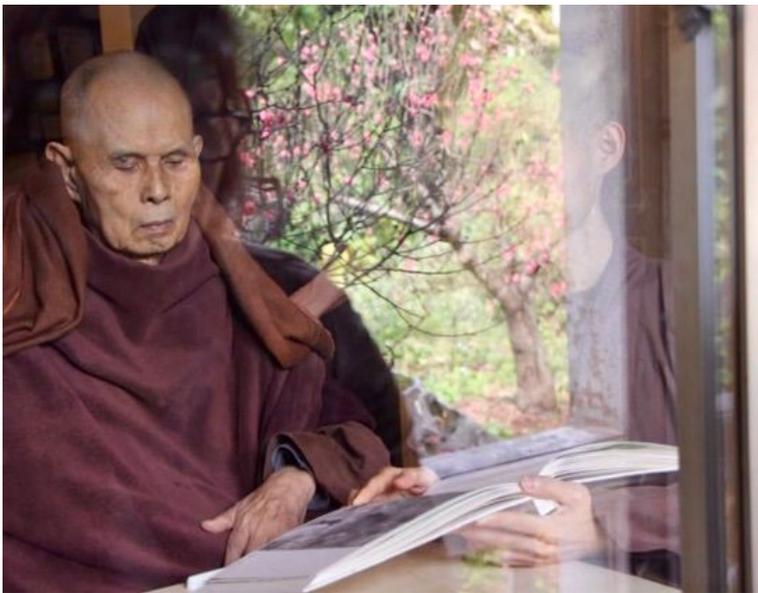
COMMUNAUTE BOUDDHIQUE ZEN
VILLAGE DES PRUNIER

2nd February 2019

Dear Beloved Community,

It is a great joy for our sangha to be approaching the Lunar New Year (Tết), with Thay's presence at the root temple in Huế, Vietnam. This is the first Tết Thay is spending in his homeland since 2005, and his first in Huế since the 1960s.

Thay has been enjoying the festive preparations in and around the temple, and the light and peaceful atmosphere in the grounds, as the young brothers and sisters clean the altar and the halls, cook special dishes to offer to our spiritual ancestors, decorate the temple with flowers and budding trees to welcome the New Year. A charming old peach tree, already showing its first delicate pink blossoms, has been planted in front of Thay's window for him to enjoy as he sips his tea.



Despite the cool and rainy weather, Thay's health has been remarkably stable over the past few weeks, and he is continuing to receive Eastern treatment and acupuncture. When there's a break in the heavy rains, Thay comes outside to enjoy visiting the Root Temple's ponds and stupas, in his wheelchair, joined by his disciples. Although his body is frail, Thay's mind is still very lucid. Recently, on a clear and sunny day, we drove Thay around Hue for him to enjoy the New Year atmosphere, and the flower market stalls packed with bright chrysanthemums and traditional blossoming plum trees (with [yellow mai flowers](#)). Thay surprised the entourage by then directing the delegation to visit two temples where he has a connection and paid his respects at the ancestral altars. This afternoon, the weather was so pleasant and bright, that Thay was able to go outside and enjoy visiting his favorite spots in Từ Hiếu.

Over the past few weeks, many lay and monastic practitioners from all over the world have been coming to visit the Tù Hiếu Root Temple and adjacent sisters' community at Diêu Trạm. There is a beautiful, light atmosphere of serenity and peace, as the community enjoys practicing sitting meditation, walking meditation, and mindful eating together there, mindful of Thay's quiet presence in his hut nearby.

Every Tết, Thay is always delighted to offer “parallel verses” to inspire the community's practice and welcome the New Year. Practitioners from around the world [can print out the calligraphies](#) and post them in our home or at work, as a small reminder of our aspiration. The verses invite reflection and offer at least one small thing we can do to add wellbeing and happiness to the coming year.

This year, our community is offering the phrase:

*Harmony in our home
Joy in the world*

Is there something we can do, right now, to bring a little more harmony to our home? That home may be within our heart or body, or in our physical home and close relationships. One calming in-breath or out-breath may be enough. Or perhaps a word or gesture of loving kindness to those around us.

The calligraphy challenges us. Do we have faith that there can be joy in the world, in the heart of the present moment? Can we look deeply to see how joy begins with harmony within? In his later years of teaching, Thay would always remind us to come back to ourselves, our loved ones and the Earth. And from that solid ground of connection, we will know what to do and what not to do in order to help the situation.

If we would like harmony in our society, nation and world, then we also need harmony in our hearts and homes. There is *joy* in doing our best, to cultivate harmony and touch the wonders of life that *are* available to us, even in this very moment - our two eyes, the presence of our loved one, or even the little miraculous flower by the path. Collective peace and joy *are possible* in each little wakeful moment. As Thay would say, “It is not enough just to suffer!” in the midst of the challenges faced by humankind and our Earth; if we want to avoid burning out, *we also have to nourish and nurture our peace and joy.*

In each of our centers, our “spiritual home” in Europe, the US and Asia, as well as at Tù Hiếu Temple in Huế, there is a sense of harmony and peace this Lunar New Year, knowing that Thay is there in Vietnam, the source of our Plum Village family. It is like the calligraphic circle that our Teacher loves to make. He breathes in with the first half of the circle and out on the second half - completing the circle with all his love and care.

As part of the Tet celebration, our community prepares traditional Vietnamese “earth cakes” to offer on the altar as an expression our love and commitment. The brothers and sisters enjoy a festive evening of songs, music, brotherhood and sisterhood while cooking these round earth cakes through the night in massive pots on open fires. How fitting for our time and for Mother Earth that these offerings are called “earth cakes” in Vietnamese to represent our vow to live simply and help lessen the human impact on the environment.

In the past month, Thich Nhat Hanh's disciples have led [mindfulness training retreats for hundreds of Catholic teachers in Uganda](#), Africa - a continuation of Thay's inter-faith work and his deep aspiration to bring mindfulness into schools around the world. Last week, [an exciting new exhibition](#) of Thich Nhat Hanh's unique calligraphic art and books opened in Bangkok. The film “Walk With Me” continues to fill theaters in the cities of France and around the world, allowing people to experience mediation and peace, even for a brief hour in their busy lives. Later this spring, Thay's global community will lead retreats across the US, as well as in Italy, Holland, Belgium, Ireland, the UK, Germany, Lithuania and Palestine. Plum Village monastics in Asia will go out to teach in Japan, Korea, Indonesia and Taiwan.

We are looking forward to hosting retreats for families, businesspeople, and young people, at our centers in the US, Europe and Thailand this Summer. Registration will open soon, and we hope that many of you will have a chance to join us as we cultivate collective healing and awakening with our growing community and to continue our teacher and his teachings.

With love and trust,

The Monks and Nuns of Plum Village

If you would like to receive updates like this about Thay and news about the community continuing his legacy directly in your inbox, please sign up [here](#).

Future updates will be posted from time to time at plumvillage.org, langmai.org, villagedespruniers.org, and www.facebook.com/thichnhathanh, as well as at thichnhathanhfoundation.org. Please be assured that we will continue to update our global community in a mindful and timely way.

