Those with a sincere aspiration to cultivate understanding and compassion as their only career, are welcome to join our monastic community. You would live, learn, and practice in one of our three monasteries: Plum Village in France, Deer Park Monastery in California, or Blue Cliff Monastery in New York. Our growing Sangha presently numbers 200 monastics spread out among these three centers.

Our Monastic Sangha

In the Plum Village monastic communities there are monks and nuns from many different countries including France, England, The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Canada, Sweden, Portugal, USA, and Australia. There is also a wide variety of ages, from age 15 to 79, though most of the monastics are in their 20's and 30's. Though our monastic Sangha represents many countries, we are predominantly a Vietnamese community from a Vietnamese Buddhist tradition. To become a monastic in our community requires openness and the ability to embrace cultural diversity. The communal languages are Vietnamese, English, and French. So, one must be fluent in at least one of these languages.

Requirements

All applicants must be under 50 years of age. No academic degree is required. If you are

under 18, you must have permission from your parents. Those who have serious or terminal illnesses or severe disabilities can not be accepted as monastics. Monks and nuns in the Plum Village tradition are celibate and make a life-long commitment to the community. They live, practice, and teach as a community and not as individuals. There is a three-year novitiate before full ordination as a monk or nun (bhikshu or bhikshuni).

Requesting Ordination

As a candidate for the novitiate you should stay in either Plum Village Monastery for at least three months. In this way you can have direct experience of monastic, communal life and the Sangha can observe whether or not you have a strong monastic vocation. After the first two weeks of your stay, you should write about your aspirations for entering monastic life and request an extended stay. As soon as the Sangha has received your letter and shared it with the community, you become a postulant, which means simply that you are requesting ordination and the Sangha is aware of it.

When you are sure you want to ordain, you can write a letter to Thich Nhat Hanh and the Sangha. In the letter you should share about your personal background, your experiences with the practice, and your aspirations for becoming a monastic. The Sangha will then meet to consider your request and at that time may offer you guidance, such as, on how to improve your positive qualities and how to transform your negative ones. After you have formally expressed your monastic aspiration, requested an extended stay, and your aspiration has been confirmed and supported by the Sangha, you will become an aspirant. At that time you are not required to contribute toward housing, food, and tuition. You will also be assigned a monastic mentor who will further assist you in your training. When you receive ordination as a novice monk or nun, then you become a member of Plum Village, and your life will be in the care of the Plum Village community.

During the time of postulancy, whether you are accepted as an aspirant or not, you are asked to participate in all activities and practices like a monastic member, though certain activities are strictly reserved for the ordained members of the community.

All monastics are ordained in Plum Village, except in special circumstances. So, if you have spent three months in Deer Park Monastery, Blue Cliff Monastery or Magnolia Grove Monastery, you would need to go to Plum Village to be ordained. If you are not sure about entering monastic life, you are free to take your time and practice as a layperson in one of our centers. However, long-term stays must be approved of by the respective monastery, and other regulations do apply.

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