

Dear Friends of the Bhutan Nuns Foundation (BNF),

It is that time of the year when we give thanks to those who have made differences in our and others' lives. This is the time of year for BNF to remember all the support you have rendered selflessly over the years. I want to take a moment, at this very appropriate occasion, to thank you, on behalf of the nuns of Bhutan, from the bottom of my heart. In Bhutanese culture, we are taught to practice gratitude daily, to give thanks every day for being alive, and to practice impermanence. But different cultures do things differently, and some nations and cultures give special thanks at this time of the year, even celebrating Thanksgiving days. Whatever one's custom, we cherish the opportunity to remember to be grateful for who we are, what we have, and for what we might be able to do for others despite difficult circumstances that come our way. We all have gone through a lot this year, and the world has gone through a lot. I am more than grateful that those brothers and sisters around the world who are in some way or another connected to us professionally or personally have been managing to keep yourselves safe and healthy.

Needless to say, the current situation with COVID-19 has impacted BNF quite a bit, especially because our major supporters are from outside Bhutan. One good thing we did in planning our Training and Resource Centre (TRC) construction project is that from the very beginning, with the wise guidance of Her Majesty the Queen Mother, the patron of the Foundation, we decided to use local materials and to employ local builders as much as possible. Because of this foresighted decision, we have experienced minimal impact in terms of the Centre's progress compared to some other projects in Bhutan. I know this information will mean a lot to those of you who have been close to this particular project.

The nuns of Bhutan, moreover, were able to concentrate and dedicate their prayers without distraction for all the visible and invisible beings on this planet. The Bhutanese people in general took advantage of this hibernation period due to COVID as a time for reflection. At BNF, we were able to engage in activities for which we might otherwise not have had time. For example, usually we invite nuns and monks to perform prayers at the construction site in order to create positive energy to move the work forward smoothly and also for the safety and wellbeing of the workers at the site. But this year, due to social distancing rules and regulations, we were unable to have the monks and nuns perform prayers in mass. Thus, the BNF staff and some friends of BNF took advantage of this void and turned this obstacle into an opportunity, learning the necessary prayers and carrying them out on our own.

While this unfortunate pandemic disrupted the momentum of our planned activities, nonetheless many unplanned good things came our way that we try to remember to appreciate. To highlight a few:

- While the Training and Resource Centre (TRC) is still a work in progress, we are proud that it is a historical showcase that preserves Bhutanese culture, tradition, and the quality of work in our country and that it is a place that our nuns will value and of which they will be proud.
- We were able to officially pronounce June 21st, as Nuns Day, which is a significant occasion recognizing the nuns of Bhutan, and I hope it spreads beyond our country.
- We all learned more than ever the importance of sustainability and self-sufficiency, the value of food, friendship, and good health, and the overall value of life. The nuns have learned survival skills including maintaining kitchen gardens and sewing masks, while also devoting themselves full time to daily learning, performing prayers, practicing compassion, and sending positive energies to those families who have lost their loved ones around the world.

- We have created a ‘Friends of BNF’ group among women in Bhutan, and this group has come together to support BNF during this difficult time.
- At BNF, the staff has been starting our days with group gratitude prayers prior to beginning our work.

These are a few of the positive habits we have adopted and continue to perform, and we give ourselves a moment to think of all our friends around the world, those whom we know in person as well as those we don’t know, realizing that there is not a single person on this planet who does not wish to be safe, happy and loved.

I thank you once again for being part of our journey. I trust that with your continued support we surely will arrive at our desired destination. As our Firefly Mission in Singapore brothers and sisters would say, “Together we light up the world.”



Nuns and BNF staff engaged in vegetable gardening during weekends.



Nuns in Prayers



Young nuns never stopped learning especially when it comes to learning English and drawings



Friends of BNF



BNF Staff performing prayers at the Training Centre

With much gratitude & deep respect to all

Dr. Tashi Zangmo
Executive Director
Bhutan Nuns Foundation